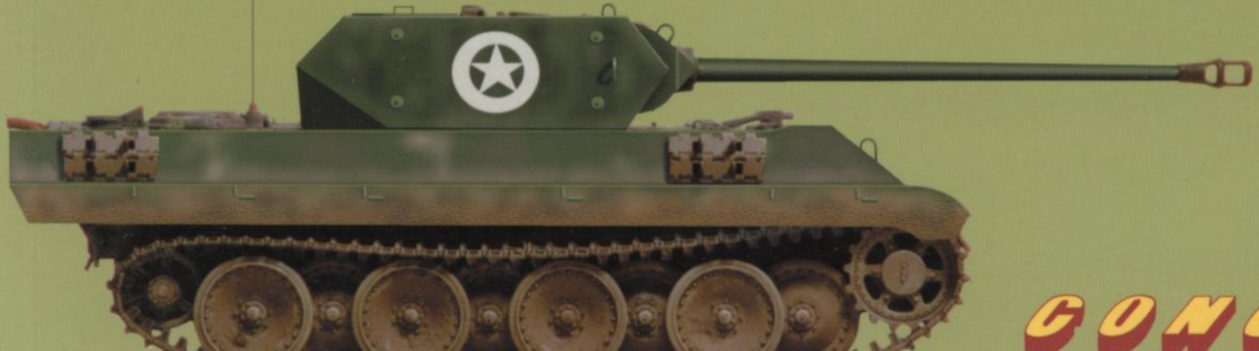
ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7045

The Battle of the Bulge

Steven Zaloga



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Text and color plates by Steven Zaloga

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Introduction

The Battle of the Bulge was the last major offensive by the German Army on the western front in World War II. For Hitler, it was a last, desperate gamble to reverse the inevitable tide of Allied victory. Due to its operational scheme, it was heavily dependent on the success or failure of the vaunted panzer force.

The operation was codenamed "Wacht am Rhein": Watch on the Rhine when originally conceived in September 1944. Hitler had attempted a smaller panzer counter-offensive in September 1944 that attempted to cut off Patton's Third Army in Lorraine using Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army. The utter failure of the operation convinced Hitler that half-hearted attacks against the Americans would not succeed, and so "Wacht am Rhein" envisioned the use of more than twenty German divisions against an American force less than a quarter the size. Recalling the glories of the 1940 campaign and the entrapment of the French and British force by a bold lunge through the Ardennes, Hitler decided to strike at a weakly defended stretch of the Ardennes forest in Belgium and Luxembourg to the northeast of the 1940 battlefields. The objective in 1944 would be to seize the vital port of Antwerp and cut off Montgomery's British 21st Army Group from Bradley's US 12th Army Group. The operation was prepared primarily by Hitler, who had come to distrust the professional German officers after the 20 July 1944 bomb plot against him.

The attack would be launched by three German armies from the Eifel region of western Germany in a north-easterly direction. On the right flank was the Sixth Panzer Army, later redesignated as Sixth SS Panzer Army. This formation was given the priority in men and equipment, and was commanded by one of Hitler's old cronies, Sepp Dietrich. By this stage of the war, Hitler favored loyalty over talent, and the Wehrmacht generals dismissed Dietrich as a "good sergeant" but not an able commander. The 12 and 326.Volksgrenadier Divisions would be used to crack through the US defenses in this sector, which were believed to be manned only by the green 99th Division. Once the defenses were penetrated, the I.SS-Panzer Corps consisting of the 1.SS-Panzer Division "Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler" and the 12.SS-Panzer Division "HitlerJugend" would carry out the exploitation mission to the Meuse river and beyond to Antwerp. To add further muscle, the II.SS-Panzer Corps consisting of the 2.SS-Panzer Division "Das Reich" and 9.SS-Panzer Division were in reserve to exploit any breakthrough. Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army had 358 tanks and 264 tank destroyers and assault guns at the start of the fighting, about 64% of the total German armored vehicle strength in the initial attack.

The center of the German assault would be conducted by Gen. Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army attacking the battered 28th Division, the green 106th Division, and the 14th Cavalry Group. Manteuffel's force had a heavier infantry element with five infantry and paratroop divisions, and less armor. Manteuffel's exploitation force was the Panzer Lehr Division, the 2.Panzer Division and the 116.Panzer Division, with the new Führer Begliet Brigade in reserve. His forces totaled 197 tanks and 151 tank destroyers and assault guns, or about 36% of the attacking armor. Manteuffel was one of Germany's most skilled panzer commanders, and his forces would come closest to reaching the Meuse river. Brandenberger's Seventh Army, aimed at Bastogne, was the weakest of the three German armies. It consisted of four infantry and paratrooper divisions, and practically no armor at all. It faced elements of two US infantry divisions.

The German operation was not well planned as the key details were selected personally by Hitler with little staff support. None of the senior German commanders were optimistic about its chances, realizing the enormous difficulty of operating from the forested Eifel region of Germany in early winter. They urged a less ambitious attack which would have been aimed at securing a new defense line on the Meuse river, but their recommendations were rejected by Hitler. The neighboring Ardennes region was well suited to the defense, and more poorly suited to offensive operations than the Sedan area of the Ardennes employed by the Wehrmacht in 1940 during its defeat of the French Army. Indeed, an attack out of the Eifel was so implausible that the Allies consistently overlooked ample intelligence indicators that the Germans were planning some sort of operation for December. Hitler's suspicion of his generals led to extraordinary secrecy measures, and Bradley's headquarters were lulled into ignoring other evidence by the lack of hints of the attack in the German coded Enigma communications traffic. However, the intelligence staffs of both Patton's Third Army and the Ninth Army suspected something was in the offing, but failed to convince the First Army which would bear the brunt of the attack.

For "Wacht am Rhein" to succeed, it would have to push through the US infantry divisions in no more than two days, seize one or more Meuse river bridges, and strike towards Antwerp before the US Army could bring in reinforcements from either shoulder. To reinforce the main assault, Hitler added two special operations to the main plan. Operation Greif (Griffon), led by Otto Skorzeny, was a Trojan Horse effort undertaken by the improvised Panzer Brigade 150. Part of the unit, consisting of English speaking soldiers would be to infiltrate the US lines in US uniforms to disrupt the defense by spreading rumor and misinformation. Two of the unit's battle groups were equipped with armored vehicles dummied up to look like US vehicles. They were assigned to race ahead of the main German force to seize key Meuse river bridges. The second effort was a paratroop drop behind US lines in the 6.Panzer Army sector, yet another effort to seize key bridges.

Hitler reserved the best new equipment for the Ardennes offensive. As is evident from the photos in this book, the German tank units were heavily equipped with new production Panther tanks. From details of the tanks, it is evident that they were from the September-November 1944 production batches with the latest features. The Ardennes campaign also marked the debut on the Western front of some new types of vehicles including the small Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer and the massive Jagdtiger. Although the King Tiger became the symbol of the Battle of the Bulge due to some famous photos, in reality there were very few Tiger units in the offensive, and they played an insignificant role in the fighting.

US forces in the attack sector consisted of two divisions, the 4th and 28th, that had taken a terrible beating in the Huertgen forest that autumn. They were in the Ardennes for recuperation. To the east were two fresh divisions, the 106th and 99th Divisions, sent to the quiet Ardennes front to become acclimated before being sent to more active fronts. The weakest section of the US front was the Losheim Gap, held by a thin covering force of the 14th Cavalry Group, thinly strung out between the 106th Division around St. Vith, and the 99th Division near the Elsenborn ridge. In total, the US Army had 242 M4 medium and M5A1 light tanks in this sector, less than half the German tank strength. These were located primarily in separate tank battalions attached to the various infantry divisions, and elements of the 9th Armored Division that were in reserve in the sector.

Had the Germans not struck in December, the US 12th Army Group was planning two offensives. The first of these was a continuation of earlier First Army efforts to the north east of the Ardennes against the Roer river dams. Patton's Third Army was also planning a major offensive in the Saar, scheduled to begin the day after the German attack, 16 December 1944.

The Sixth Panzer Army Attacks

In contrast to the neighboring Fifth Panzer Army which decided to attack with little artillery preparation, Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army preceded its attack with a heavy artillery bombardment. It had little effect, as the 99th Division facing them had log reinforced dug-outs, mainly to provide some cover due to the winter weather. Although the Germans had expected to find only the 99th Division in the area, in fact, it was mixed in with units from the veteran 2nd Infantry Division which had already started limited offensive operations to the north east of the "Wacht am Rhein" sector. In the face of the tenacious infantry defense near the two neighboring villages of Krinkelt and Rocherath, the initial German attack bogged down. Reinforced by tanks from the 12.SS-Panzer Division, the Germans finally pushed the 99th Division out of the towns to the neighboring Elsenborn ridge. But the delay in overcoming the initial defenses and the stubborn defense of the Elsenborn ridge doomed the prospects for a break-through along the northern shoulder of the attack zone. The attack by the 12.SS-Panzer Division would progress no further than a few kilometers beyond Krinkelt-Rocherath, and the front was soon reinforced by the "Big Red One"- the 1st Infantry Division.

The attack in the neighboring sector by the 1.SS-Panzer Division had more success. This sector faced the weakest link of the American defenses, the thinly held Losheim Gap protected by a cavalry squadron of the 14th Cavalry Group. This unit was quickly forced into retreat by the much stronger German forces. The only major breakthrough was enjoyed by one of the boldest of the division's commander's, Col. Jochen Peiper, who was assigned the strongest elements of the division for the main exploitation mission. Kampfgruppe Peiper soon lunged into the gap between the US 106th and 99th Divisions, down along the Ambleve river valley. The battle group quickly became notorious for its brutal murder of civilians and prisoners, especially the massacre at the Baugnez crossroads on the approaches to Malmédy. Peiper's attack soon began to falter due to both the terrain and stiff resistance from isolated US units. The narrow country roads proved ill suited to the movement of large mechanized formations, and Peiper's columns soon created traffic jams back to the German frontier. The narrow river valleys restricted Peiper's ability to deploy his formidable panzer forces against the weak US positions. The combination of narrow valleys and several significant rivers were ideally suited to delaying tactics, and US combat engineer battalion harried and harassed Peiper's spearhead by blowing key bridges. Peiper's battle group had outrun its clock, and on 19 December reached only as far as La Gleize, about 40 kilometers from their start point. Low on fuel, and facing growing opposition, this would be the furthest point of the Sixth Panzer Army's advance, short of the Meuse river. Many legends have grown up about Kampfgruppe Peiper, due more to the success of the publicity showered on the Waffen-SS by Goebbel's propaganda ministry than by the actual results. Although far better equipped than the neighboring Wehrmacht formations, the Sixth SS-Panzer Army did not show results commensurate with its resources. Fighting in the sector remained intense, especially around the key road junction of St. Vith being held by a task force from the 7th Armored Division. But the main German attack had been blunted within a week of the start of the offensive.

Fifth Panzer Army Penetrates the Center

With the Losheim Gap opened up by the retreat of the 14th Cavalry Group, the Fifth Panzer Army's infantry formations were able to encircle two regiments of the inexperienced 106th Division in the approaches to St. Vith. The surrender of these two regiments after days of fighting was the single worst defeat of the US Army in the Ardennes. However, their resistance had bought time for reinforcements to arrive, and Combat Command B of the 7th Armored Division arrived in St. Vith to help shore up the defenses. The collapse of the 106th Division presented the Germans with their best opportunity for deep penetrations of the US defenses, and Manteuffel took full advantage of it. His panzer divisions, from west to east, the Panzer Lehr, 2.Panzer and 116.Panzer Divisions began to flow through the area between Bastogne and St. Vith. Recognizing the potential of this assault and the failure of the Sixth Panzer Army assault, the 2.SS-Panzer Division was shifted to this area, forming a right wing to the panzer drive. With no substantial armored or infantry forces in their path, the way seemed clear to the Meuse. But within days of the start of the offensive, the US First Army had begun to reorient its forces and shift mobile units into the endangered sector. Hitler has sorely underestimated the mobility of the US Army, and overestimated the mobility of his heavy panzer forces in the forested countryside of the Belgian Ardennes. The 2.SS-Panzer Division ran into strong defenses of the 7th Armored Division around the road junctions at Grandmenil and Manhay leading to a series of savage tank and infantry battles. Further to the west, the 116.Panzer Division ran into defenses of the 3rd Armored Division at Hotton, and the 84th Division at Marche. The deepest penetrations were made on the western flank of the German advance on Christmas day, with the 2.Panzer Division and Panzer Lehr Division advancing to within a few miles of the Meuse river near Dinant, almost a hundred kilometers from their start point. The British 29th Armoured Division had been positioned behind the Meuse to reinforce the American forces. A small task force of Sherman tanks from the 3 RTR sallied across the river near Foy-Notre-Dame, blunting the furthest panzer penetration of the campaign. With its spearheads tangled up with the British near the Meuse, the German panzer units were smashed on their right flank by the experienced 2nd Armored Division in a massive tank battle around the town of Celles. By Christmas evening, the fields north of Celles were littered with 40 German tanks and more than 840 other vehicles, marking the end of any hopes for Operation Wacht am Rhein. In the next few days of fighting, the German advance was decisively contained at a cost of 82 tanks compared to 27 M4 and M5A1 tanks of the 2nd Armored Division. Fighting continued between the 9.Panzer Division and the 2nd Armored Division around Humain after Christmas, but the tide had turned.

Reducing Bastogne

Even if the Fifth Panzer Army penetration had been halted short of the Meuse, it was the deepest of any sector of the German front. One of the main problems of continuing the advance in this sector was that the panzer divisions were being supplied along roads blocked by the town of Bastogne that was still in American hands. The German Seventh Army that had been assigned to seize Bastogne was the weakest of the three, and Bastogne had been reinforced by the 101st Airborne Division and a combat command from the 10th Armored Division before being encircled. In the hopes of redeeming his failed offensive, Hitler ordered that Bastogne be taken to clear the way for further attempts towards the Meuse to the northwest. As a result, panzer units used in the failed assaults by Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army such as the 12.SS-Panzer Division and the decimated remnants of the 1.SS-Panzer Division were shifted westward to take part in the siege of Bastogne.

Although new German units were now descending against Bastogne, relief was also on the way. Patton's intelligence group had predicted a German offensive, and Patton had already begun to make plans to halt his planned offensive in the Saar and shift forces to the northeast. Spearheading the relief effort was his best tank unit, the 4th Armored Division.

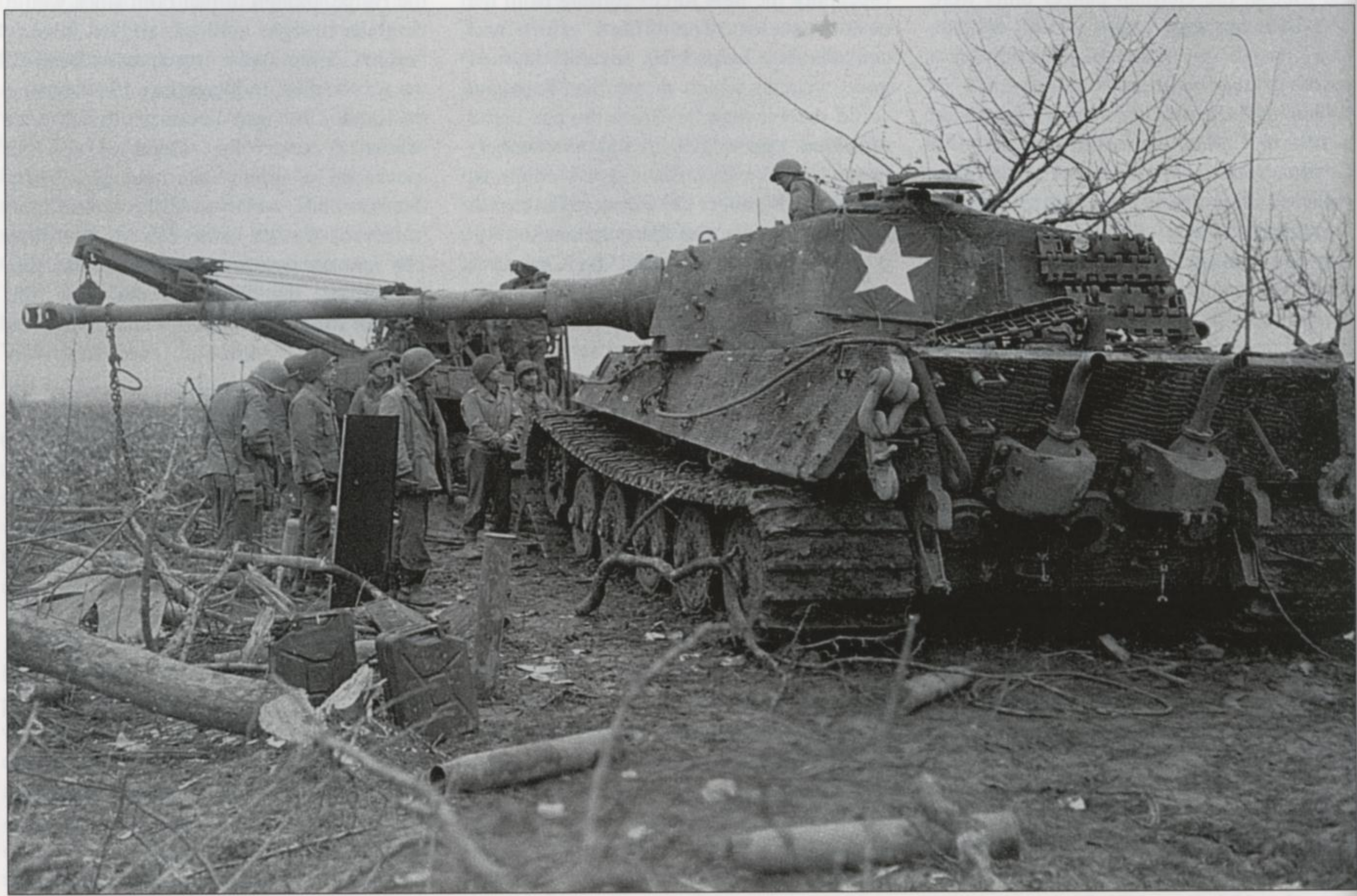
As a result of these two efforts, the focus of the Ardennes fighting would shift in the last week of December to the area around Bastogne. While Patton's Third Army attempted to break into Bastogne and reinforce it from the south west, German forces assaulted the city on all sides, especially the new forces coming from the eastern sector. The Allied effort was considerably helped by several days of good weather which meant that Bastogne could receive supplies from the air. Freed of cloud cover, Allied fighter bombers began to strike at German supply columns, and heavy bombers were directed to smash rail-yards across the German frontier on which the attack depended. By Christmas day, the tide had clearly turned in favor of the American defenders. The German attack had failed for several reasons. The US Army, even its two green infantry divisions, had put up unexpectedly stiff resistance. Although the defense of Bastogne is legendary, the defense of Krinkelt-Rocherath in the first days of fighting by the new 99th Division was equally critical in denying the Germans a secure northern shoulder. By the end of the month, the German supply network had collapsed, in part due to the poor road network in the Eifel and Ardennes, but also due to the strikes against tactical traffic by Allied fighter bombers when the weather cleared after Christmas, and the heavy bomber strikes against the rail-heads in Germany. The German forces were unable to build up enough strength in the sector, while the US Army was able to use its better mobility to bring far stronger forces to bear on the German spearheads by Christmas.

Break-out from Bastogne

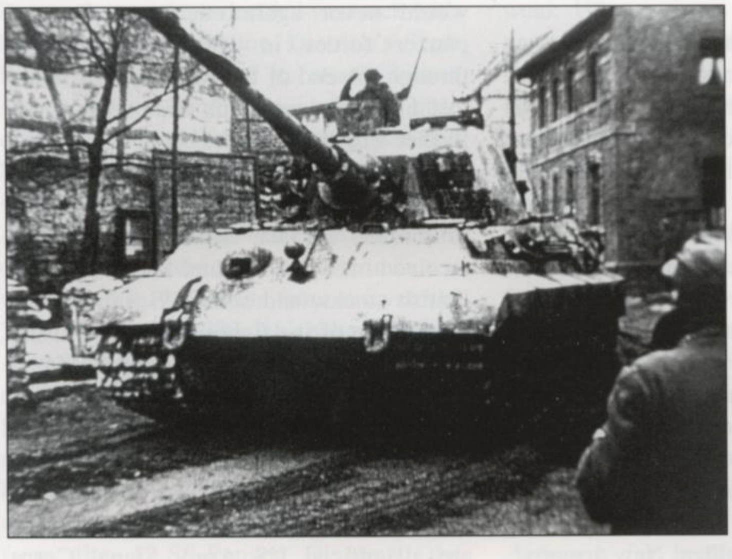
By early January, the German offensive had become exhausted. The Allied air attacks had wrecked German supply lines, and the Luftwaffe was decisively smashed in its last gasp offensive, Operation Bodenplatte, on New Year's Day. As more and more US forces poured into the Ardennes, a counteroffensive began to take shape. This eventually developed as a two-pronged attack with armored units of Patton's Third Army striking out north-eastward from Bastogne and units of the First Army striking south-westward from the Elsenborn ridge area, converging on the road junction of Houfallize. New armored units were brought in to assist the counter-offensive, notably the 6th and 11th Armored Divisions near Bastogne, and remaining combat commands of the 9th Armored Division, which had been fighting in the Ardennes since the start. Patton's Third Army linked up with the First Army near Houfallize on 16 January. This was the symbolic end of the Battle of the Bulge, though in fact both sides would continue to fight until the end of January before German forces were pushed back all the way to their 16 December 1944 starting positions. In mid-January, the Soviet offensive over the Oder river had succeeded in ripping enormous gaps in the German lines, and even Hitler realized the futility of further offensives in the west. The January fighting in the Ardennes was made all the more brutal by the deteriorating weather which favored neither side. Although cold and wet through most of December, by early January the snow began to accumulate, making operations in the forested Ardennes difficult for both sides.

Armored vehicle losses on both sides were quite heavy. The German unit lost about 370 tanks, 300 assault guns and tank destroyers and about 450 light AFVs through the middle of January, about 40% of the forces committed. These figures tell only part of the picture, as many of the tanks still in service had been worn out during the fighting. For example, of the 570 Panthers committed to the campaign, by mid-January 198 were lost, 185 were broken down, and only 97 were operational. German losses in trucks and transport were especially heavy due to the Allied air attacks late in December. After the Ardennes campaign, the Allied forces would never again encounter German panzer forces in significant strength through the end of the war. The US Army lost 680 tanks and tank destroyers and a further 210 light AFVs, about 20% of its tank forces. This created some short-term problems due to a shortage of spare tanks in theater. In fact, in January, the US received over two hundred Shermans from British stocks, and some US units in the final phase of the fighting ended up using small numbers of M4A2 and M4A4 Shermans. However, by February, the US units had been brought up to strength for the ensuing offensive into Germany.

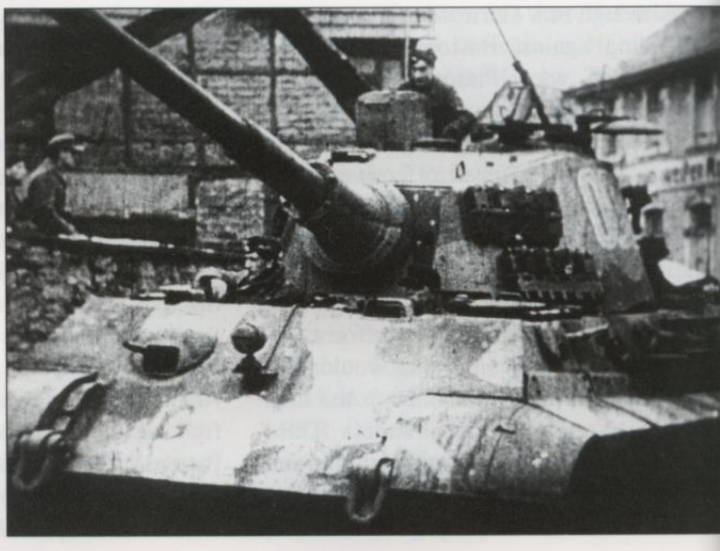
Unless otherwise noted, these photos are all official US Army Signal Corps photos. The author would like to thank the archivists who have helped in locating these photos including Charles Lemons and Candace Fuller at the Patton Museum, Ft. Knox; Randy Hackenburg, at Special Collections, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks; and Alan Aimone, at Special Collections, US Military Academy, West Point.



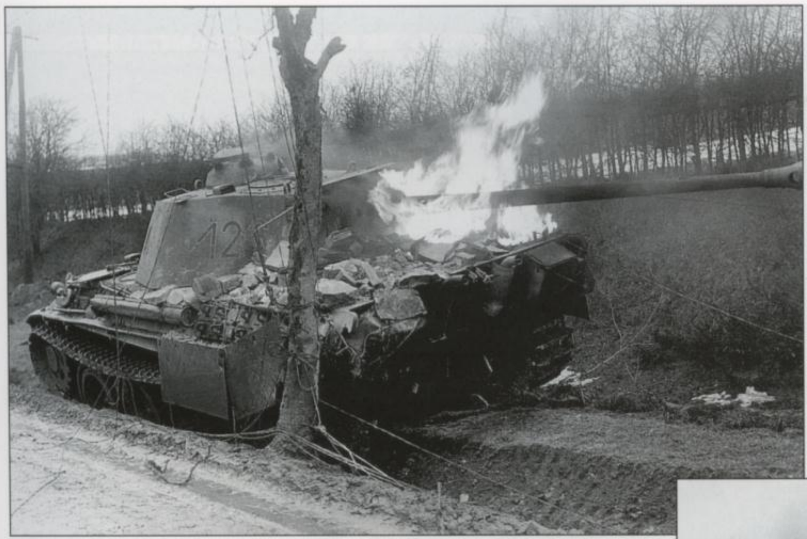
In anticipation of the Ardennes fighting, German panzer units were brought up to near full strength. The s.Pz.Abt. 506 was rebuilt, but lost this tank, tactical number 2-11 near Geronsweiller on 15 December, a day before the start of the Ardennes offensive. It was recovered by the US 129th Ordnance Battalion as seen here.



Some of the best known images to have emerged from the Battle of the Bulge are the views of the King Tiger tanks of s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501 which served with Kampfgruppe Peiper. Here, the headquarters company is seen driving through Tondorf at the start of the campaign. (Bill Auerbach)

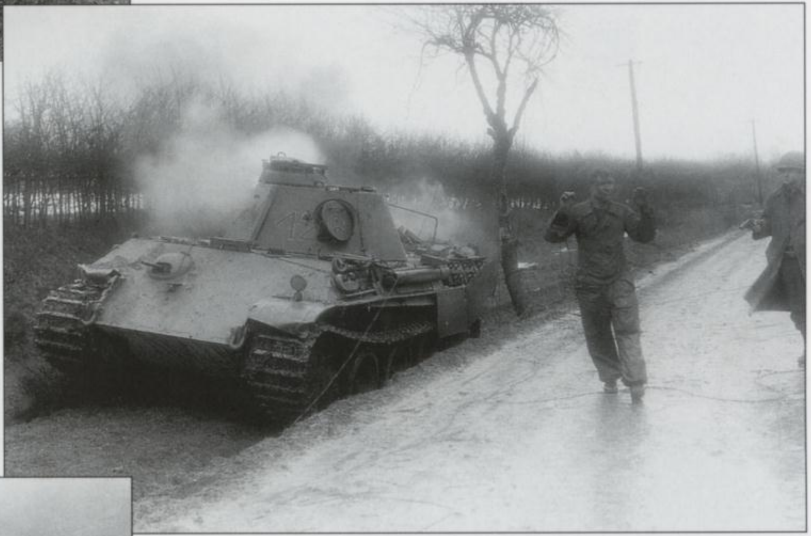


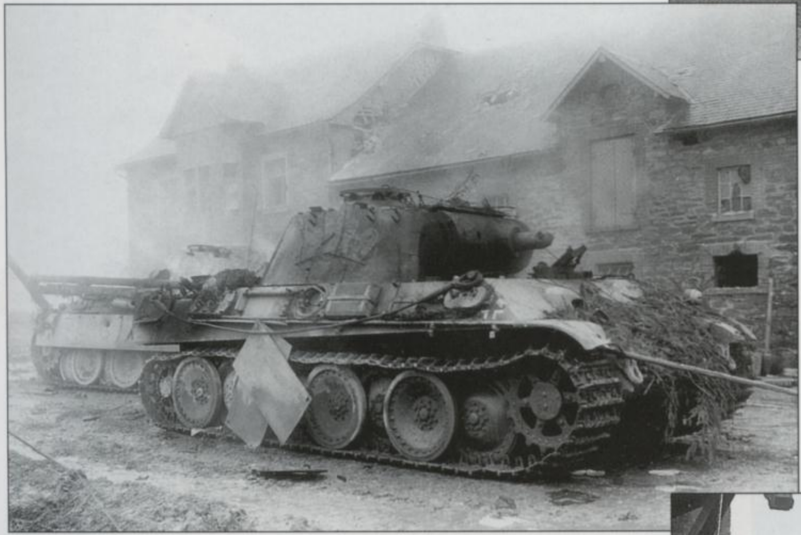
Another view of a King Tiger of s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501 moving through Tondorf. Peiper was not happy to be saddled with these clumsy tanks, and so stuck them at the tail end of his column. They consumed enormous amounts of fuel and contributed little to the battle. (Bill Auerbach)



Some of the most savage fighting of the opening phase of the Ardennes campaign took place near the twin villages of Krinkelt-Rocherath when the 12.SS-Panzer Division attempted to secure the northern shoulder of the salient by overwhelming the 99th Division. Although inexperienced, the 99th Division put up a legendary fight, and this Panther Ausf. G, tactical number 126, was one of its first victims, along the Wirtzfeld-Krinkelt road on 17 December 1944.

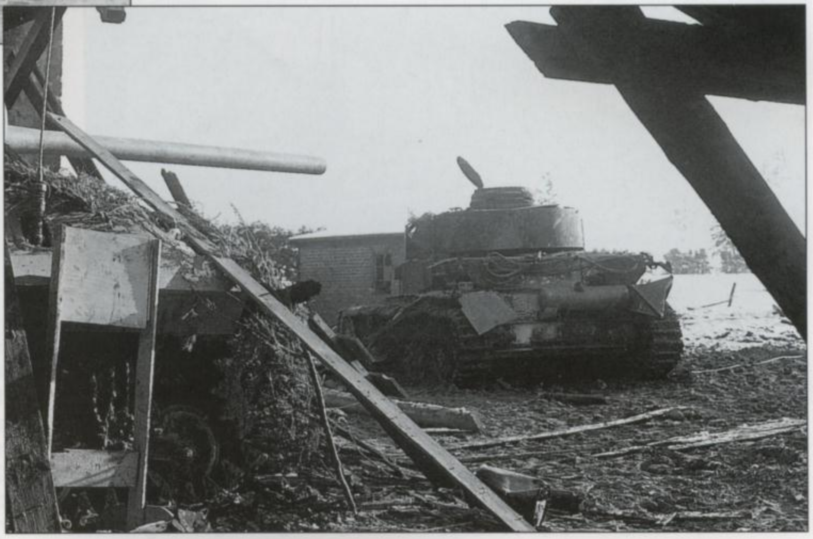
This panzer crewman is led away from his burning Panther Ausf. G, seen from the other side in the top photo. This tank was hit by a round from a pair of M4 tanks of the 741st Tank Battalion supporting the 99th Division along the western edge of the Krinkelt woods. Both Shermans were knocked out during the fighting after they had put two Panthers out of action.

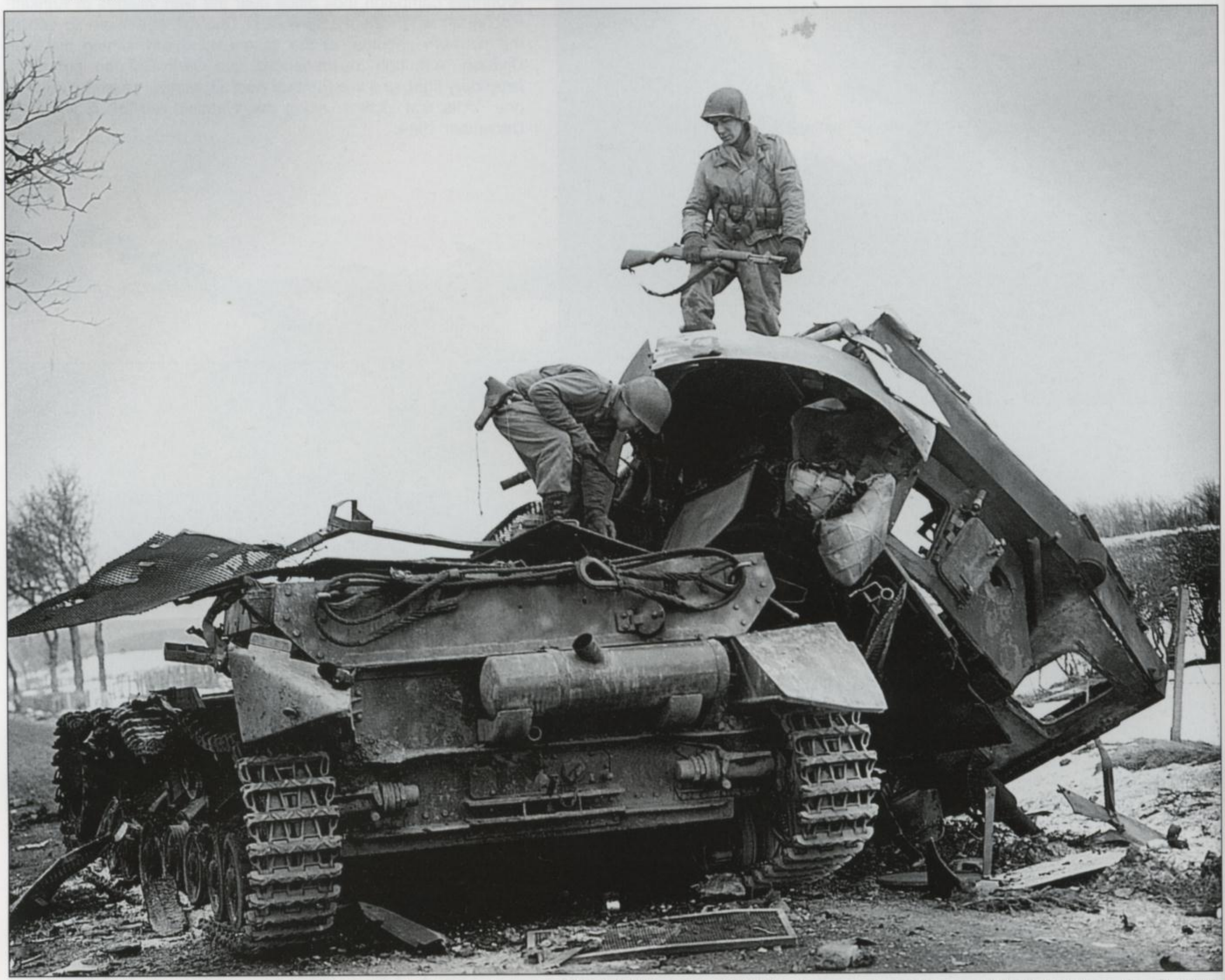




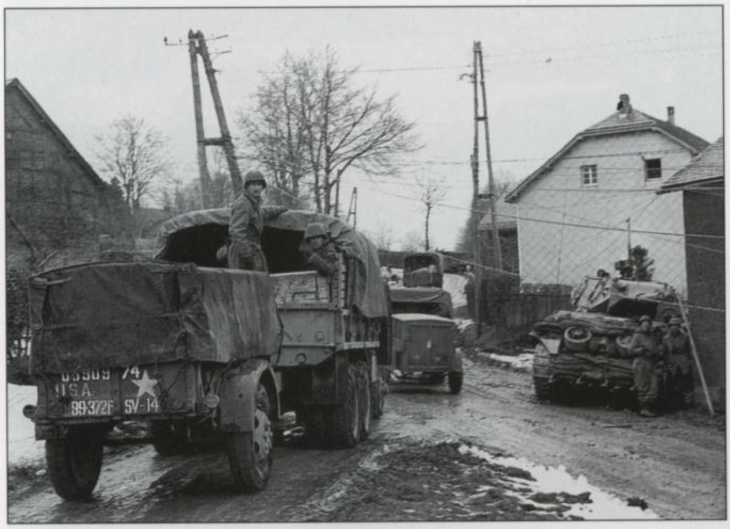
Another photo taken during the savage fighting inside Krinkelt itself after Panthers of the 12.SS-Panzer Division had broken into the town. The Panthers were knocked out at close-range by bazooka fire, and the tank in the foreground, tactical number 318, has lost its gun barrel. Although 12.SS-Panzer Division would eventually push the 99th Division out of the twin villages, they lost so much time doing so that they failed in their mission to reach the Meuse river.

After finally pushing through Krinkelt-Rocherath, the 12.SS-Panzer Division became tangled up in fierce fighting with the "Big Red One" 1st Infantry Division in the town of Dom Butgenbach on 19 December. This PzKpfw IV was knocked out inside the town, possibly by this M36 90mm gun motor carriage of 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion which was supporting the infantry. This would be the furthest advance of the 12.SS-Panzer Division, far short of its goal.

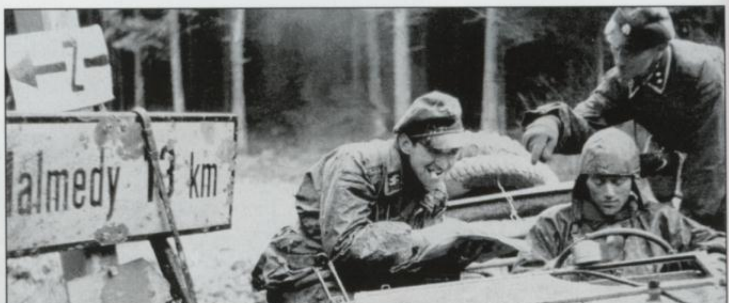




Kampfgruppe Peiper was prevented from moving down the road at Wirtzfeld by some M10 3-inch gun motor carriages of the 1st platoon, Co. C, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion which knocked out several PzKpfw IV tanks on 17 December. This was in the 12.SS-Panzer Division sector anyway, and Peiper moved its forces further westward.

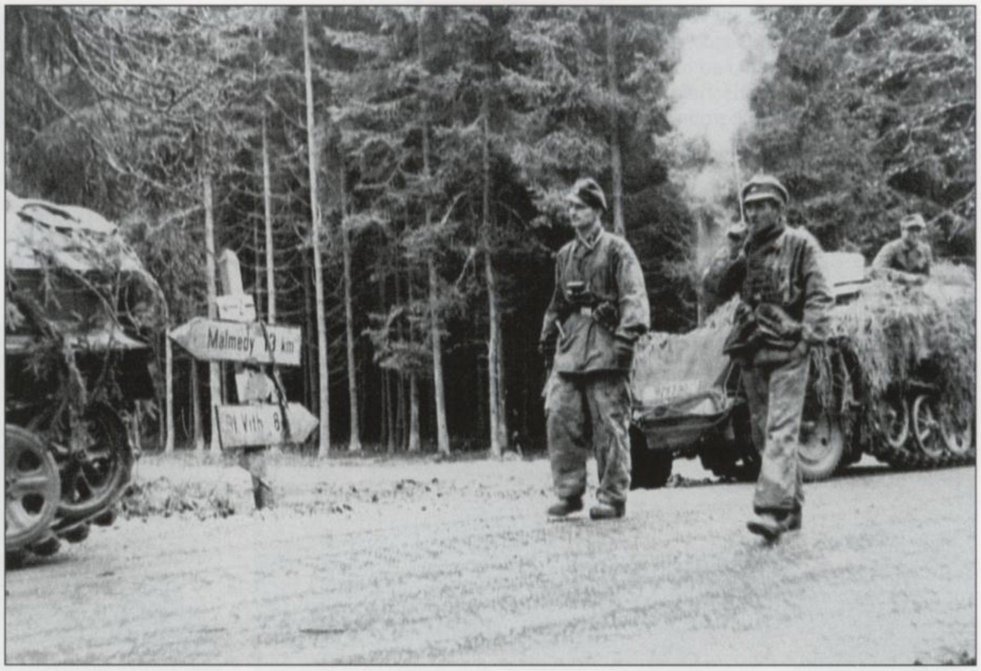


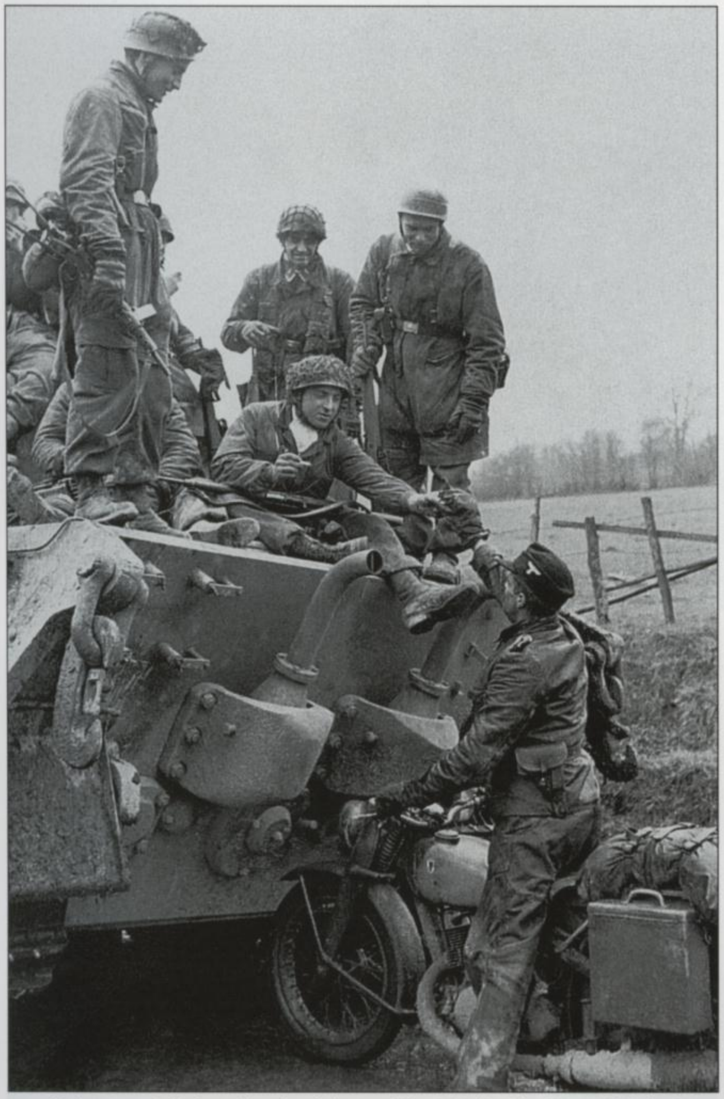
Trucks of the 372nd Field Artillery Battalion, 99th Infantry Division withdraw through a junction at Wirtzfeld on 17 December as the 12.SS-Panzer Division attacks neighboring Rocherath. The crossroads is covered by a M10 from the 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion. M10s from this unit repulsed a probe by Kampfgruppe Peiper that day along a neighboring road.



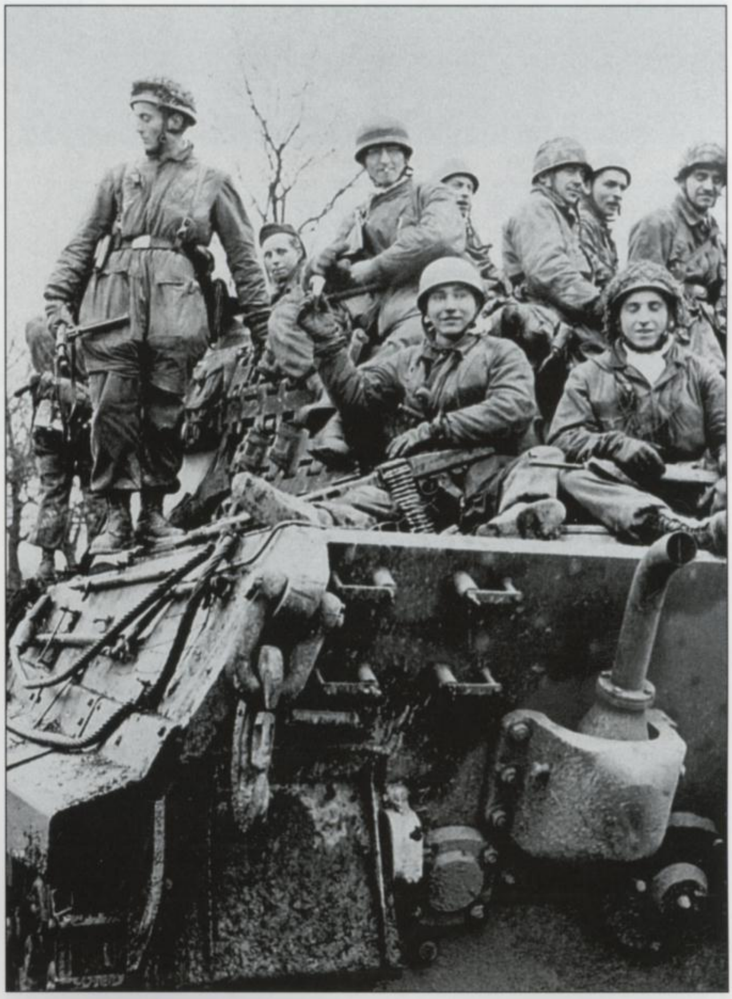
In one of the most famous scenes from the battle, Unterscharführer Ochsner champing on a cigar on the left and his platoon commander, Oberscharfüher Persin to the right discuss directions while at a roadsign at the Kaiserbaracke cross-roads on Rollbahn E on 18 December 1944. This photo is frequently misidentified as Peiper, but in fact is from the 2.Kompanie, SS-Pz.Aufkl.Abt. 1, scout elements of Kampfgruppe Knittel.

Persin and Ochsner walk along a column of vehicles from SS.Pz.Aufkl.Abt.1 at the Kaiserbaracke cross-roads on 18 December 1944. To either side are two SdKfz 250 half tracks.



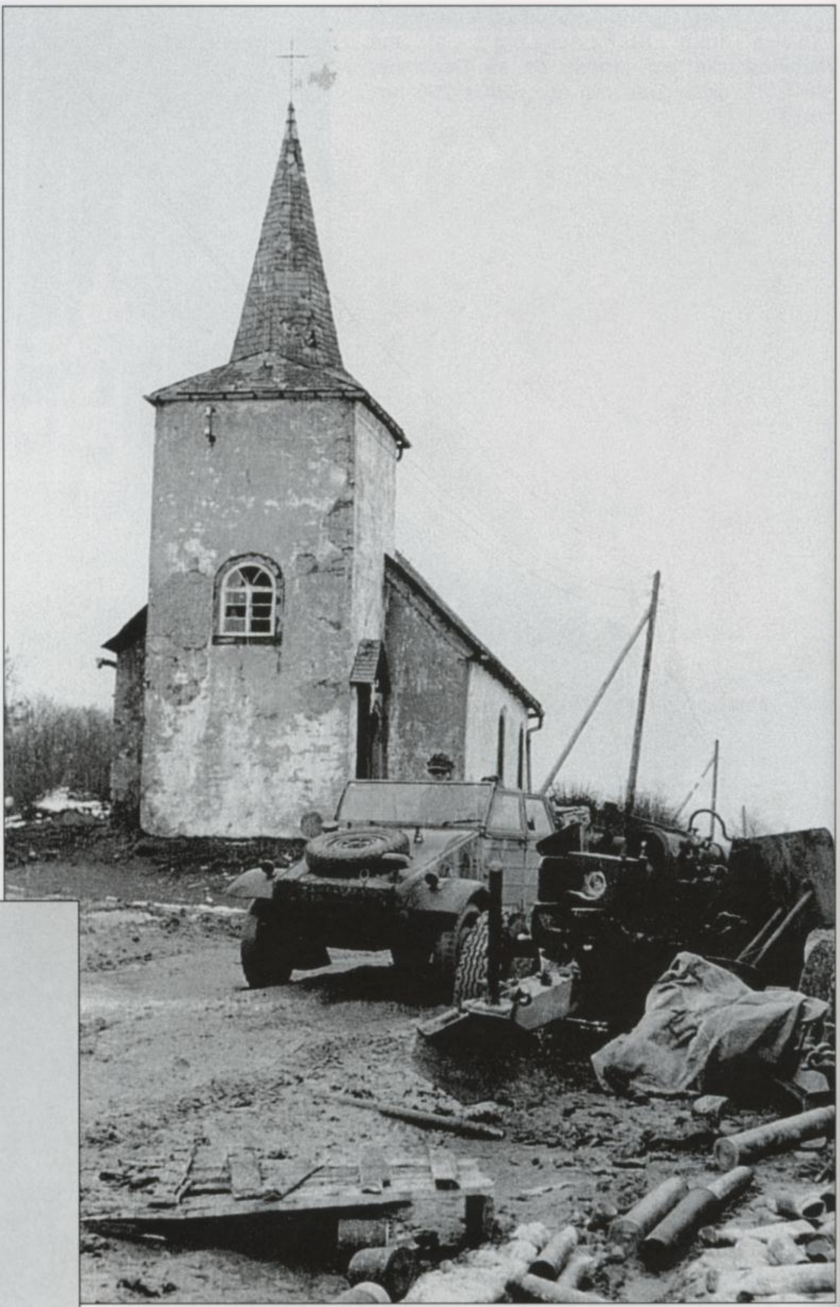


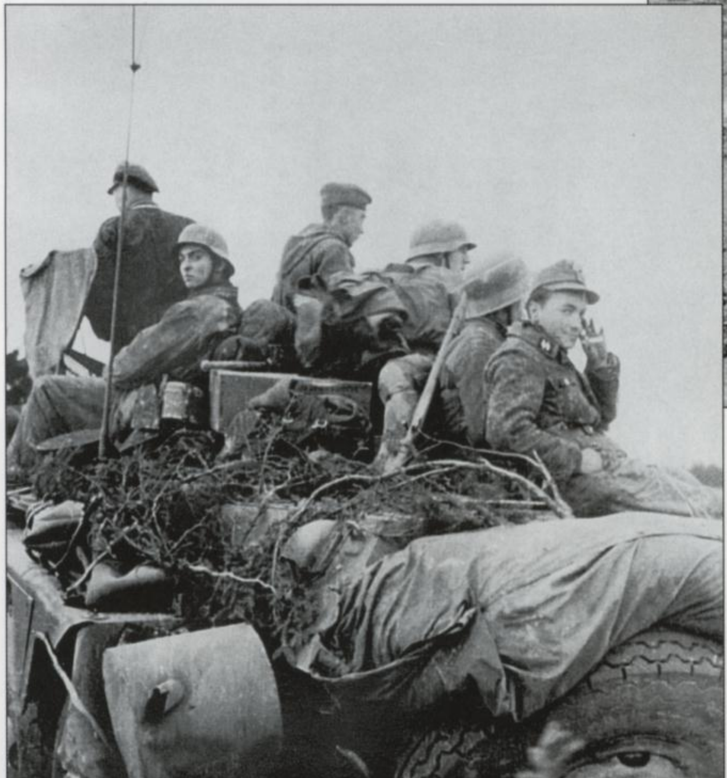
Peiper was infuriated by the failure of the 3.Fallschirmjäger Division's to seize Honsfeld on 17 December 1944 and insisted that the regimental commander turn over a battalion of paratroopers to his column. Some of these troops ended up riding on the engine deck of a King Tiger tank commanded by Oberscharführer Sowa near Ligneuville on 18 December 1944 as seen here. The King Tigers belonged to s.SS.Pz.Abt. 501 which made up the tail end of Peiper's column.



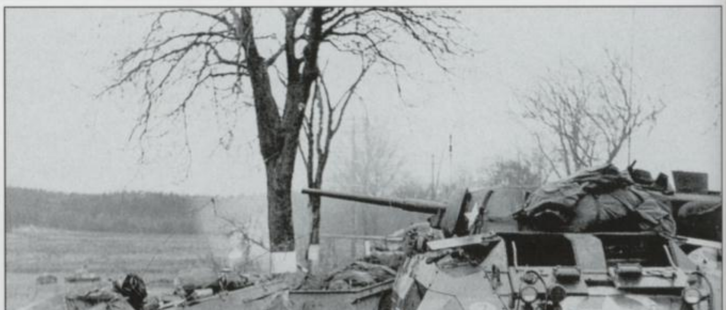
Another view of the same group of paratroopers on the engine deck of King Tiger number 222 during operations south of Malmédy on 18 December 1944. The paratrooper to the left is armed with a British Mk. 2 Sten gun. This tank was lost in Stavelot the following day while supporting Kamfgruppe Sandig.

A Küblewagen utility vehicle of 1.SS-Panzer Division passes a disabled US 3-inch anti-tank gun of the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, knocked out in the fighting for the Losheim Gap in the hamlet of Merlscheid on 18 December 1944 with the village church in the background.



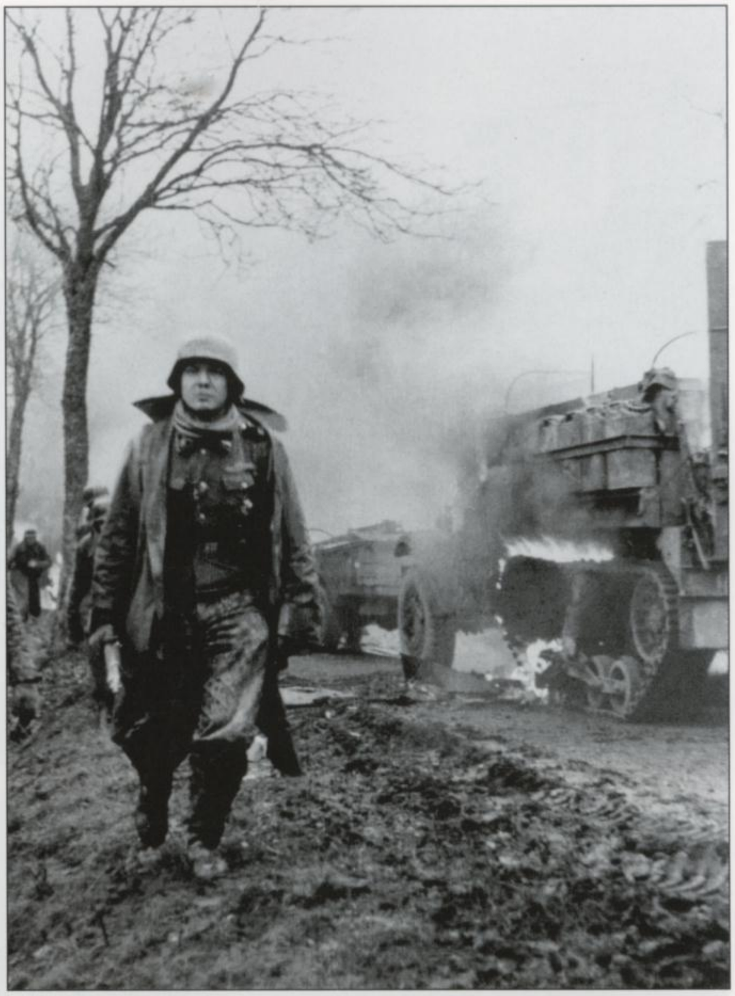


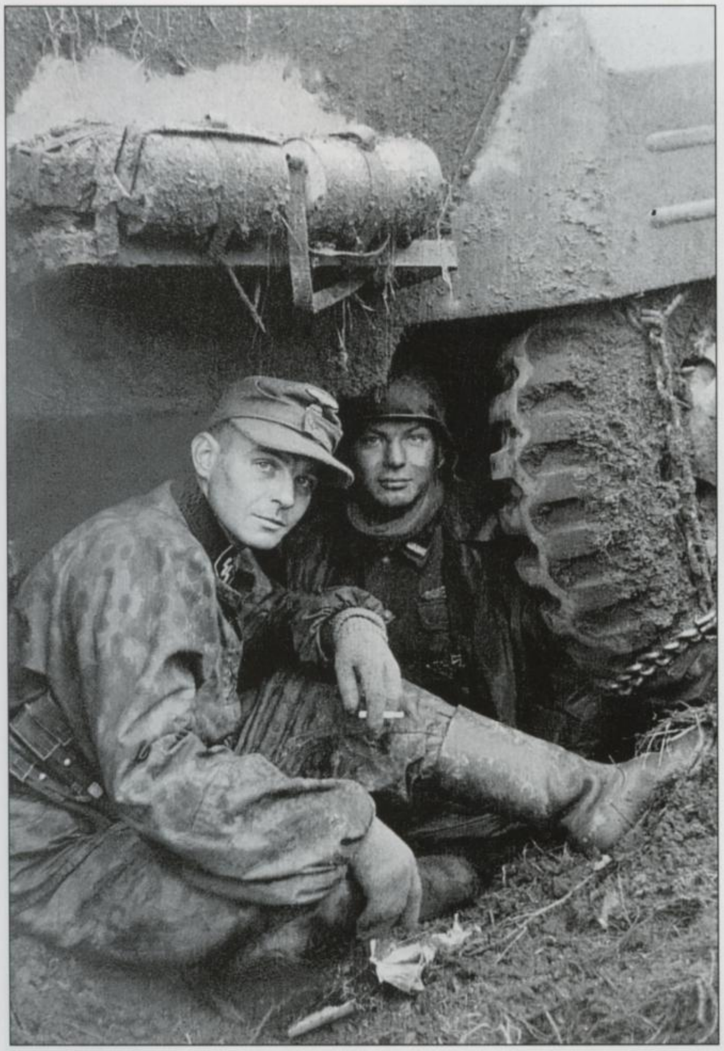
A SdKfz 234/1 reconnaissance armored car of Kampfgruppe Knittel is seen moving forward with SS paratroops on its rear deck. The deck of the vehicle is covered with pine boughs for camouflage.



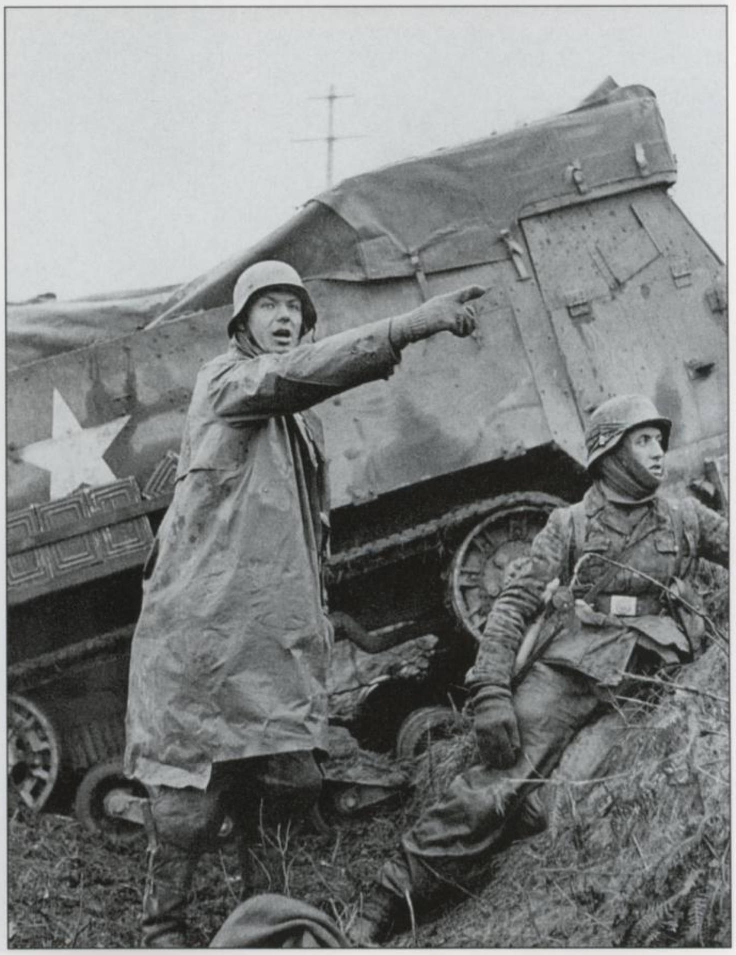
During the fighting on 18 December in the Losheim Gap, Kampfgruppe Hansen overwhelmed a column from the 14th Cavalry Group that was moving on the road between Recht and Poteau. This shows two of the M8 armored cars that were abandoned, both from C Troop, 18th Cavalry Squadron.

A pair of *Kreigsberichter* cameramen staged many of the photos along the wreckage on the Poteau road, this one of a panzergrenadier alongside a burning M2 half-track. This is the same Rottenführer seen under the M8 armored car. Little did the German photographers know that their four rolls of film would be captured several days later by the US 3rd Armored Division, becoming some of the most enduring images of the battle.

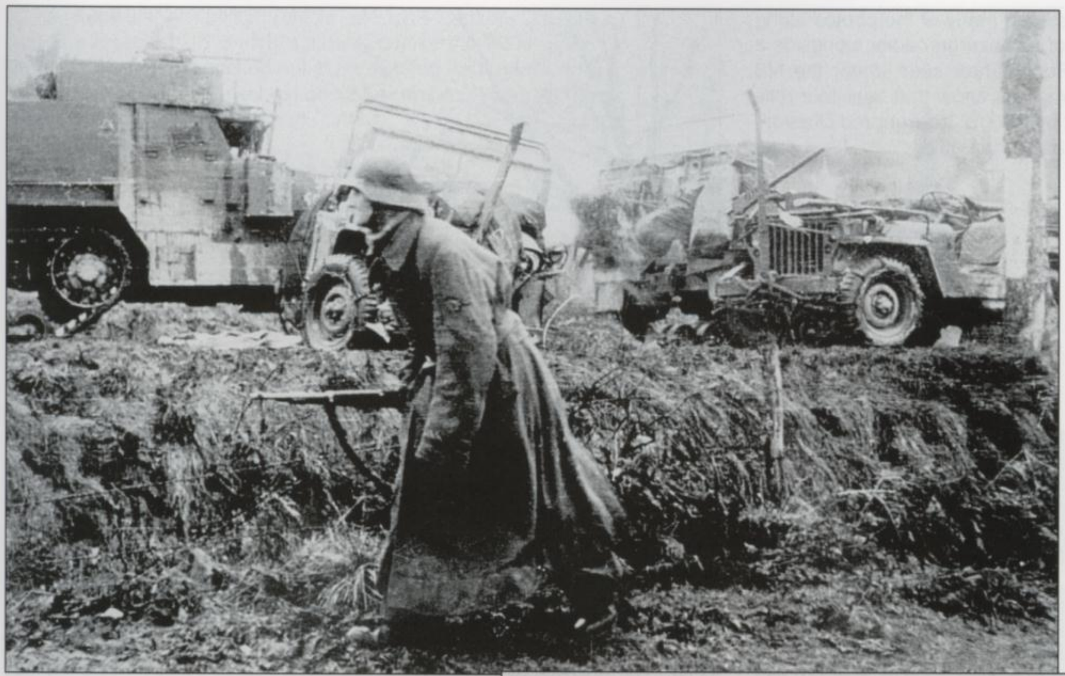




A SS-Untersturmführer takes a breather with a SS-Rottenführer under one of the disabled M8 armored cars of the overrun column near Poteau. The soldier to the right is decorated with the close-combat clasp, the Iron Cross first and second class, the infantry assault badge, and a Russian service ribbon. This photo was actually taken before all the "action" photos were staged for the benefit of the German combat cameramen.

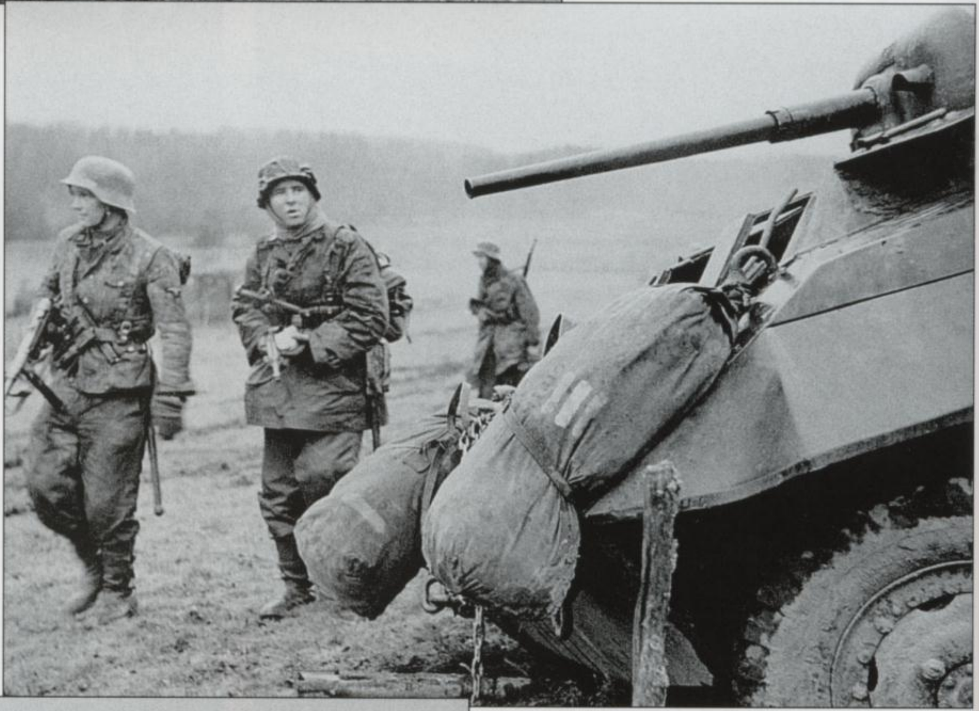


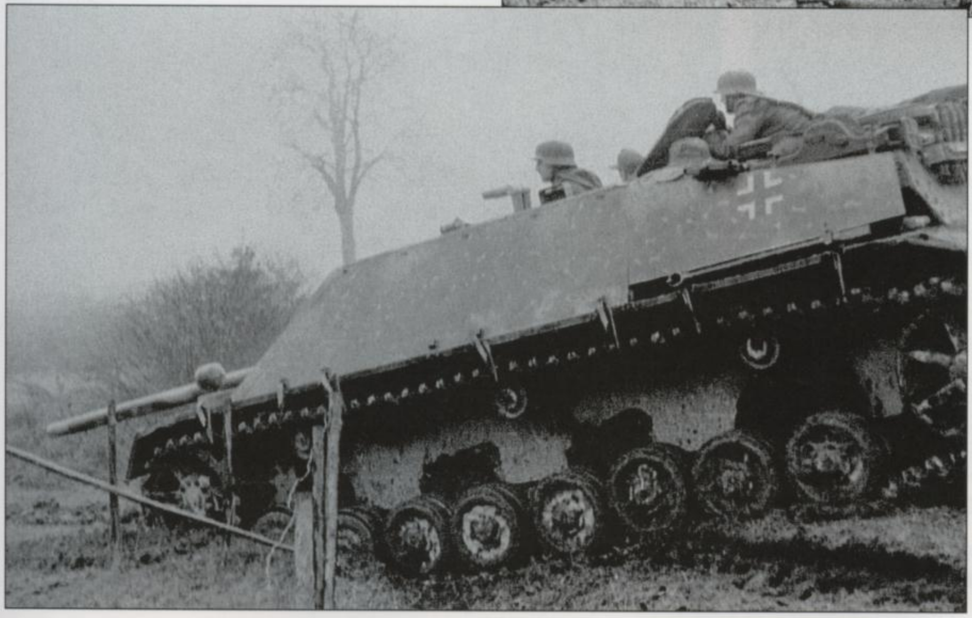
The busy young SS-Rottenführer poses again for the camera, this time alongside a disabled M2A1 half-track.



A panzergrenadier from Kampfgruppe Hansen walks along the column of burning US vehicles along the Poteau-Recht road, including several jeeps and half-tracks.

Two young panzergrenadiers of SS-Pz.Gren.Regt.1 advance past an abandoned M8 armored car from the 14th Cavalry Group column. The three colored bars on the duffel bag at the front are coded shipping markings assigned to all US units.





The logjam of burning US vehicles on the Poteau road forced this Jagdpanzer IV/70 tank destroyer of SS-Pz.Jg.Abt. 1 to move off the road cross-country. This was one of the vehicles assigned to support Kampfgruppe Hansen.

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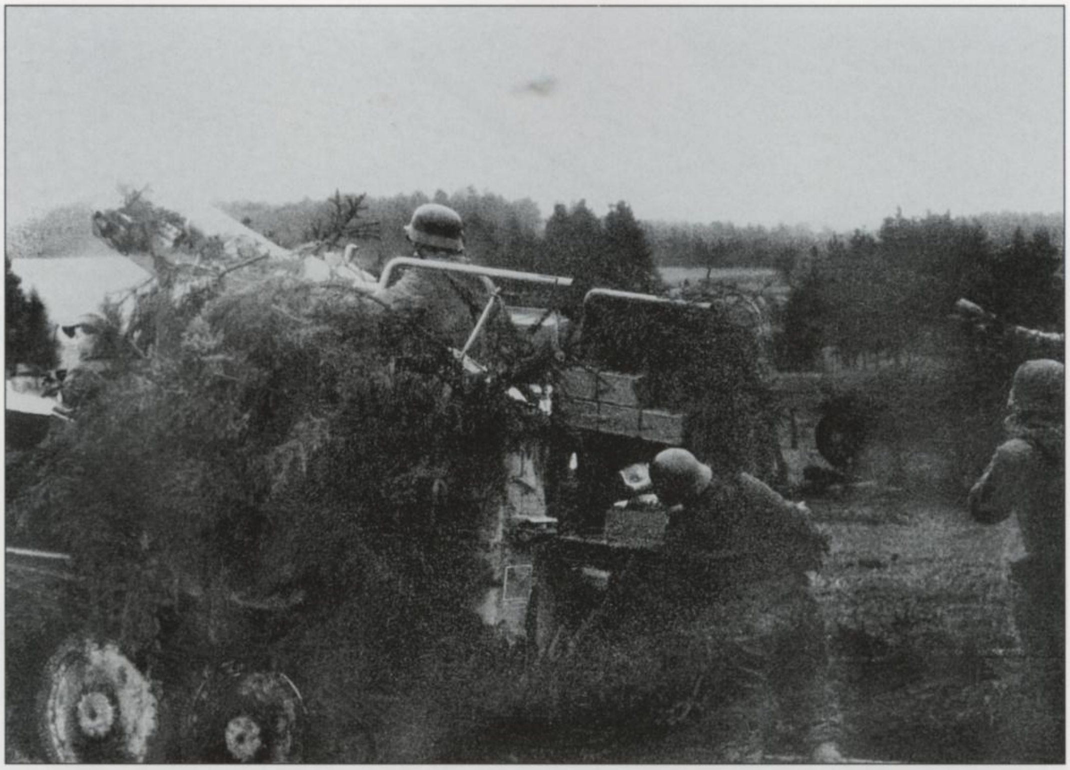
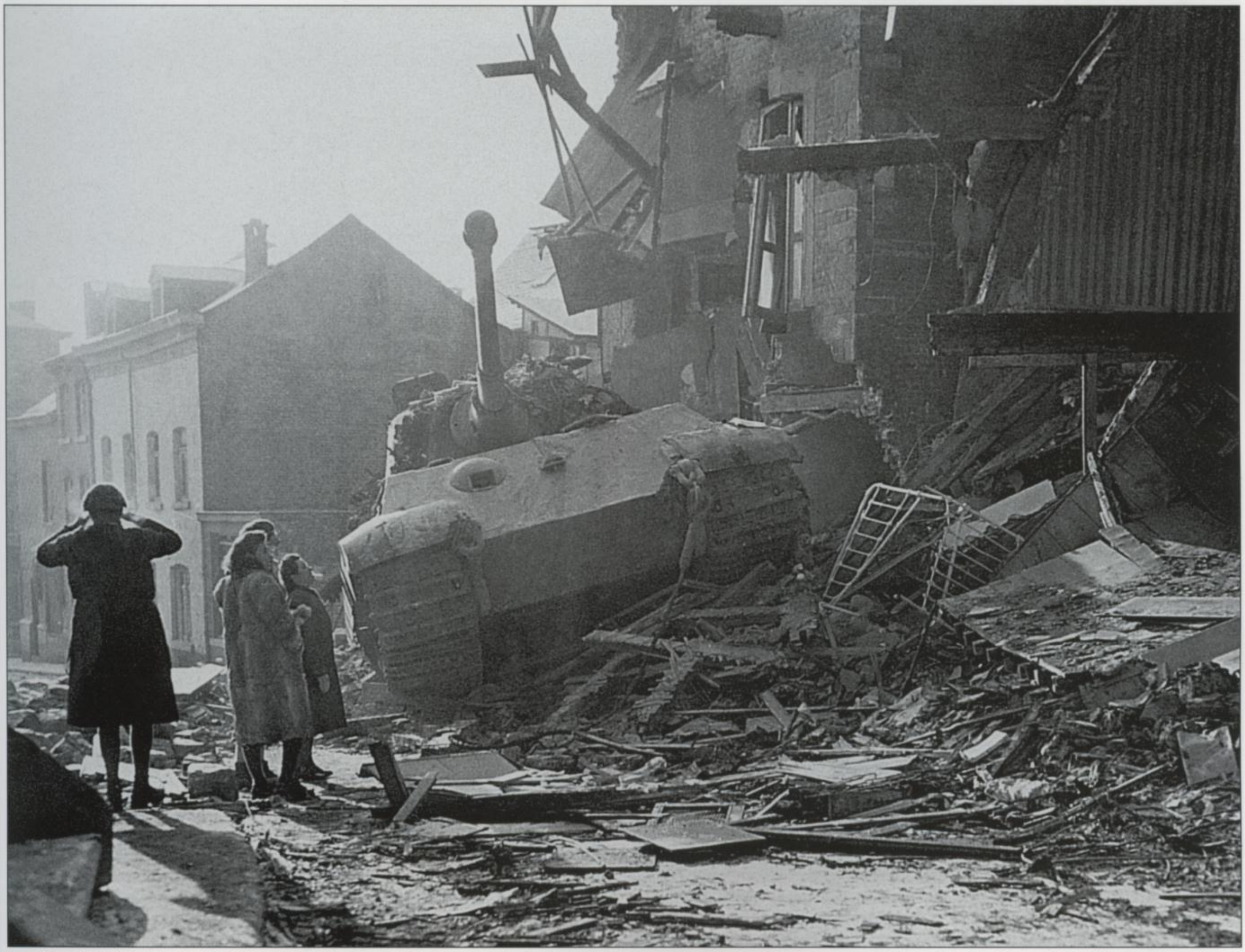
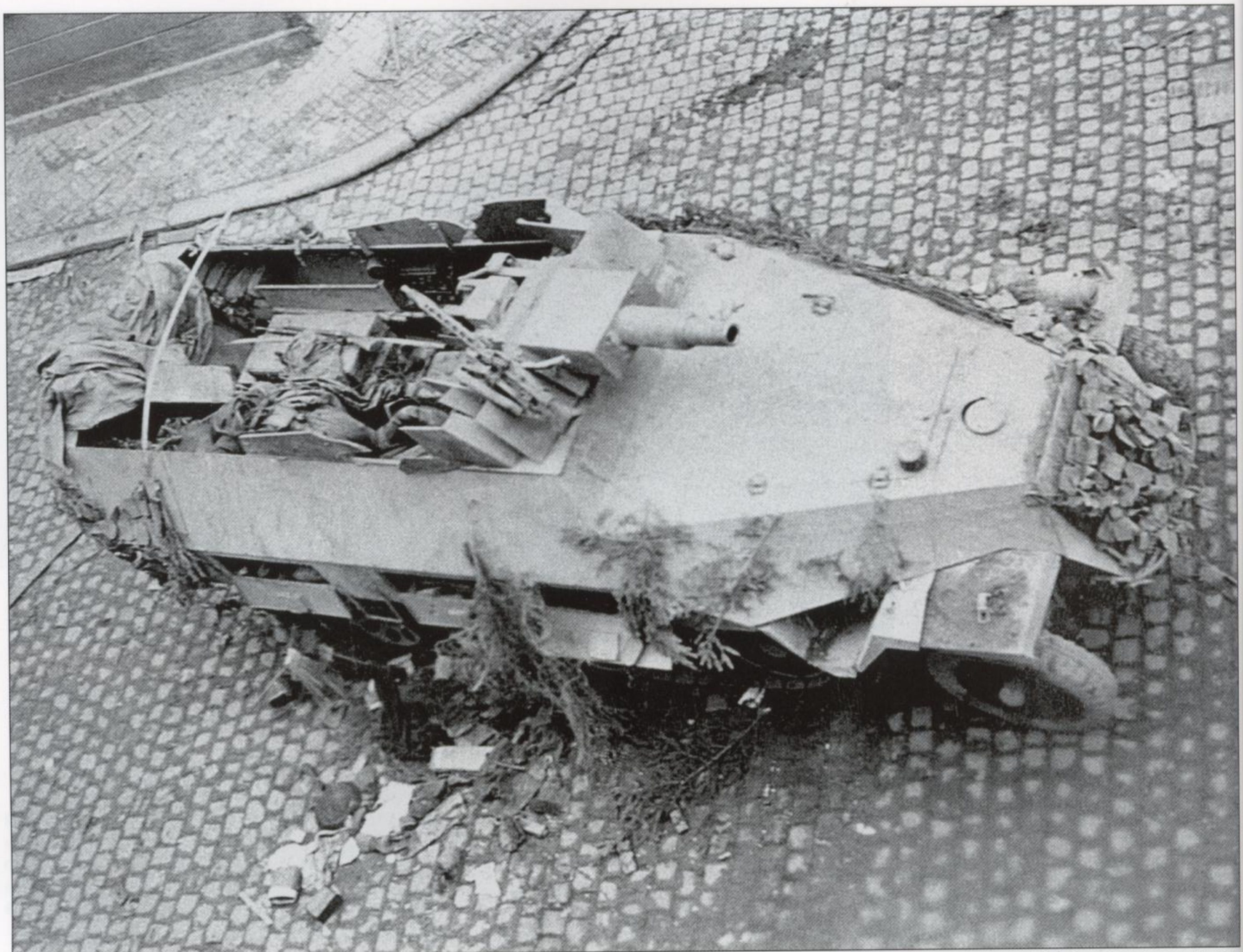
One of the final photos on the four rolls of film captured from the German cameraman was this shot of a pair of 1.5cm SIG 33/1 SdKfz 138/1 Grille self-propelled howitzers supporting the 1.SS-Panzer Division's advance on 18 December 1944. Surprisingly, this type was still in production up to September 1944, and these might very well have been from the final production batches.



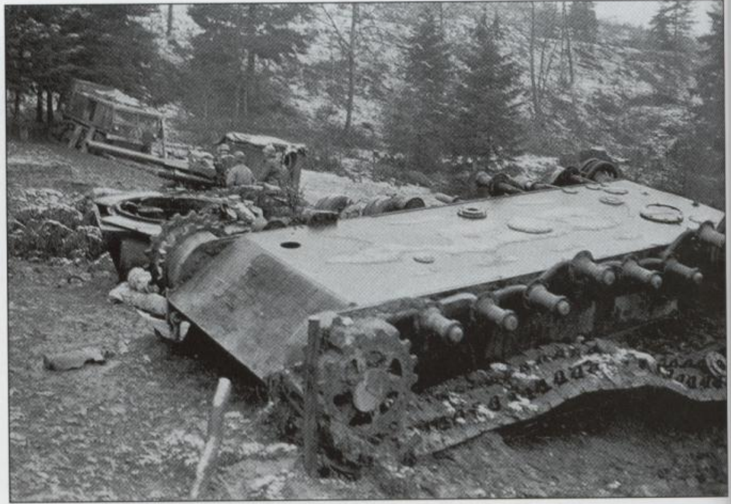


The first of Peiper's King Tigers to be lost was this one, tactical number 105, commanded by SS-Obersturmführer Jürgen Wessel, which was abandoned after it got stuck in debris on Rue St. Emilon in Stavelot on 18 December.



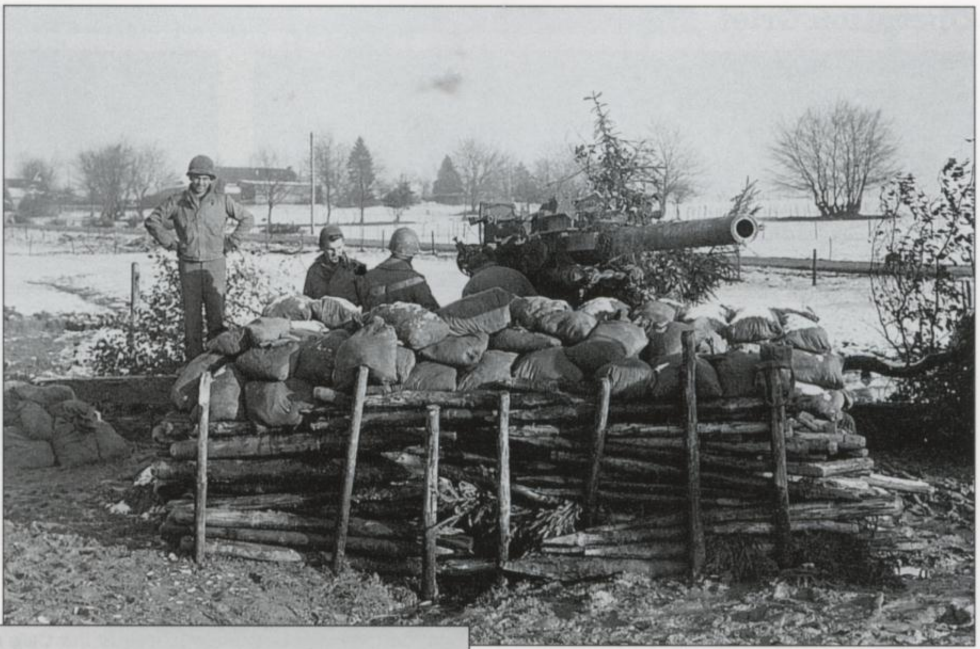
Kampfgruppe Peiper left Stavelot on its way north-west, but was followed later on 18 December by Kampfgruppe Knittel which fought a losing battle against the 30th Infantry Division for the town later in the day. This SdKfz 251/9 assault gun was knocked out by a rifle grenade in the fighting. It was probably also hit by a round from the 843rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, as a projectile has passed through both sides of the thin armor plate on either side of the 75mm howitzer.

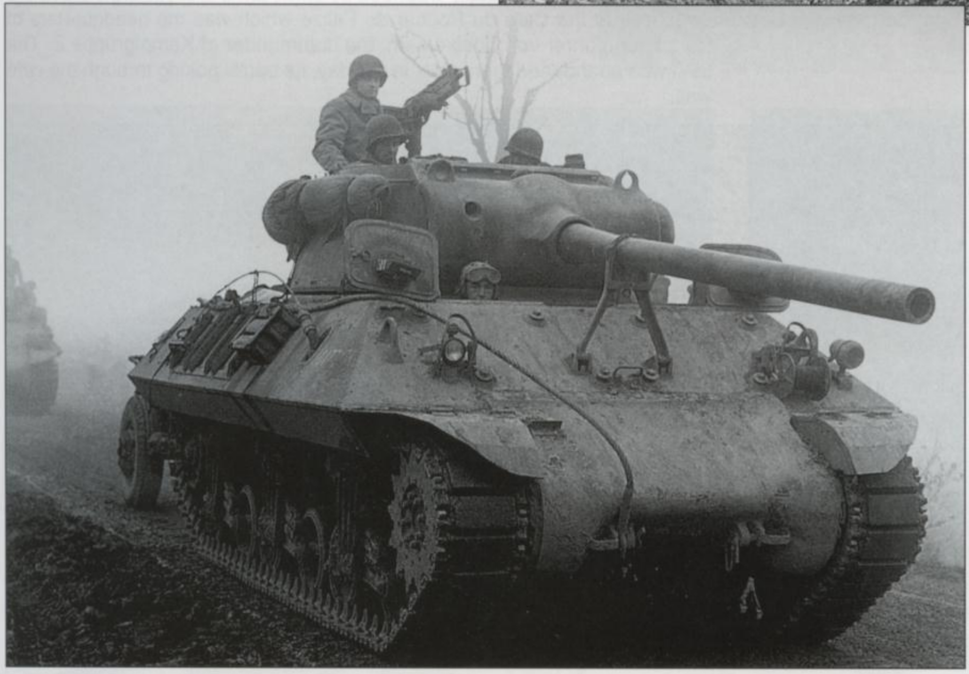
US infantry units defended themselves against tank attack using the 57mm anti-tank gun, a license copy of the British 6 pdr. It was obsolete by 1944, though it could knock out a Panther tank from the side or rear. This is a 57mm gun of the 333rd Anti-Tank Co., 83rd Division near Bovgny on 17 January 1945.



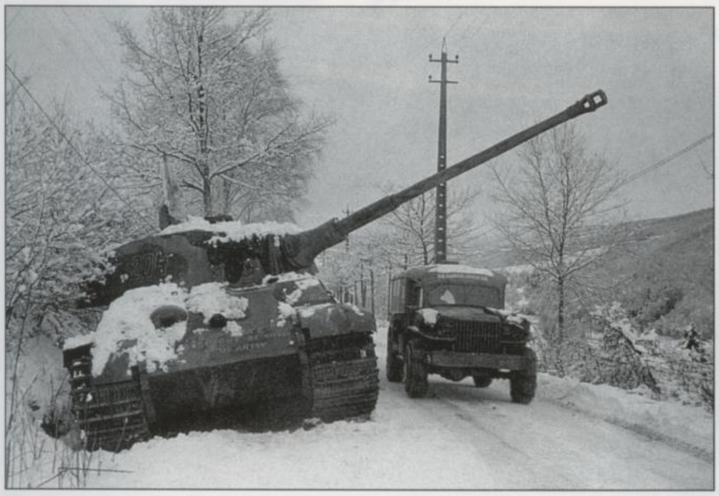
The threat posed by Kampfgruppe Peiper led to desperate measures. Although the US Army seldom used its 90mm anti-aircraft guns for anti-tank defense like the Germans did with their 88mm guns, the Battle of the Bulge was an exception. Here, a 90mm anti-aircraft gun of the 143rd AAA Battalion has been set up near a destroyed Panther tank in the outskirts of Malmédy on 22 December 1944, supporting the 30th Infantry Division. In the background is the M4 high speed tractor used to tow the gun. A second battalion, the 110th AAA Bn., also provided anti-tank defense at Malmédy.

Another example of a 90mm anti-aircraft gun being used in an anti-tank role to help support the 30th Infantry Division's cordon around Malmédy on 22 December. In this case, it has been positioned behind a makeshift defensive work of sand-bags and small timber. The 90mm guns were used on several occasions, including the fighting for Stoumont on 19 December where they were credited with three Panthers from Kampfgruppe Peiper.

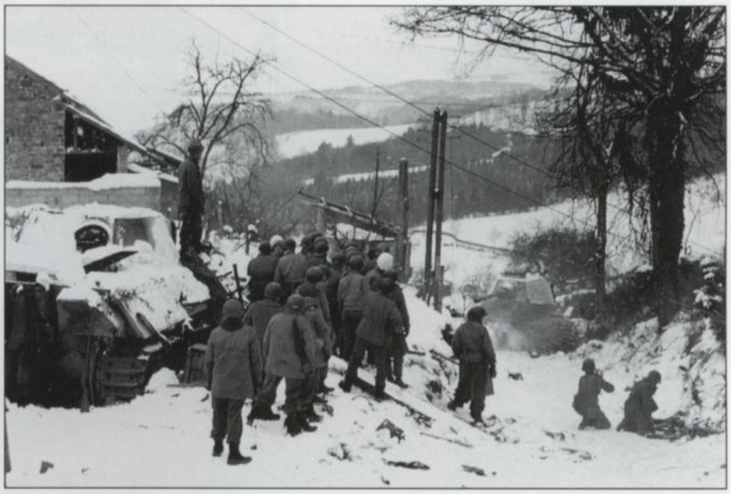




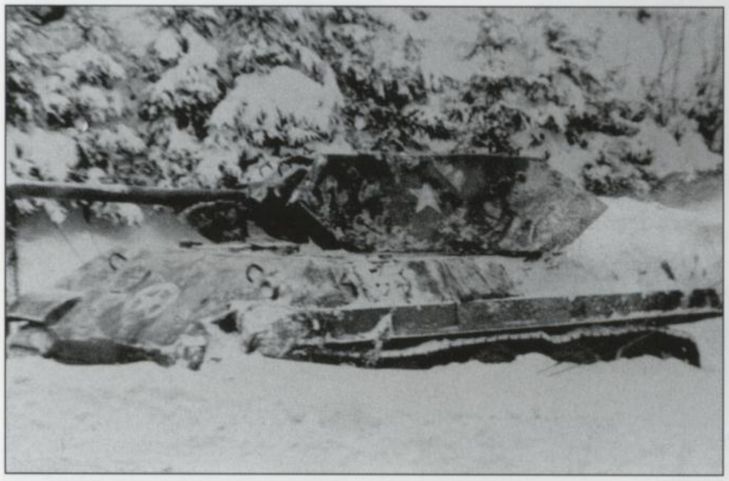
A column of M36 90mm GMCs move forward in support of the 82nd Airborne Division's attempt to halt the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper near Werbomont, Belgium on 20 December 1944. At this stage of the war, the M36 was still relatively uncommon, with only 236 actually deployed. Nevertheless, they proved invaluable in the Ardennes fighting, as they were the only US Army vehicle capable of handling the Panther or Tiger tank. This unit did not come in contact with Peiper that day, as the German column moved east.



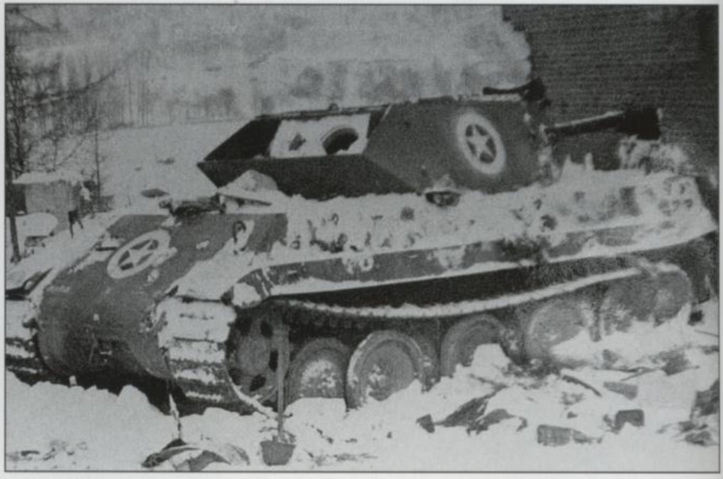
As Kampfgruppe Peiper ran out of fuel, it gradually abandoned its tanks. One of the last to be abandoned was King Tiger 204 of 2/s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501, left behind on the road near Gue in the early morning hours of Christmas Eve after La Gleize had been abandoned. It was later driven a short distance by US troops and is seen broken down along the road near Ruy on 4 January 1945.



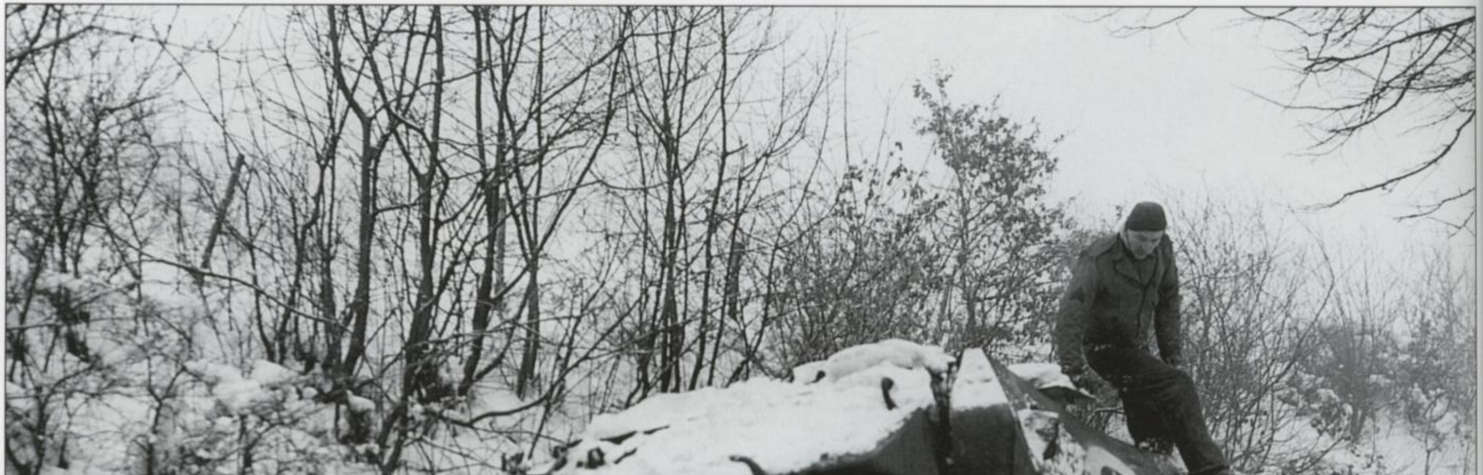
Kampfgruppe Peiper left behind some 39 tanks, 70 half-tracks and 30 other vehicles in La Gleize when they finally abandoned the town on 24 December. An I&R platoon from the 82nd Airborne Division later decided to use some of the tanks to test the penetration capabilities of the bazooka on 18 January 1945. To the left is a derelict Panther, while down in the gully is the target of the bazooka team, a King Tiger from s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501.



Skorzeny's Panzer Brigade 150 failed to launch its intended deep penetration mission due to road congestion. Instead, on 21 December they were employed in a conventional attack against the US Army's 30th Division in Malmédy. This was one of their five Panther tanks modified to resemble a US M10 tank destroyer, abandoned on the Malmédy-Spa road.

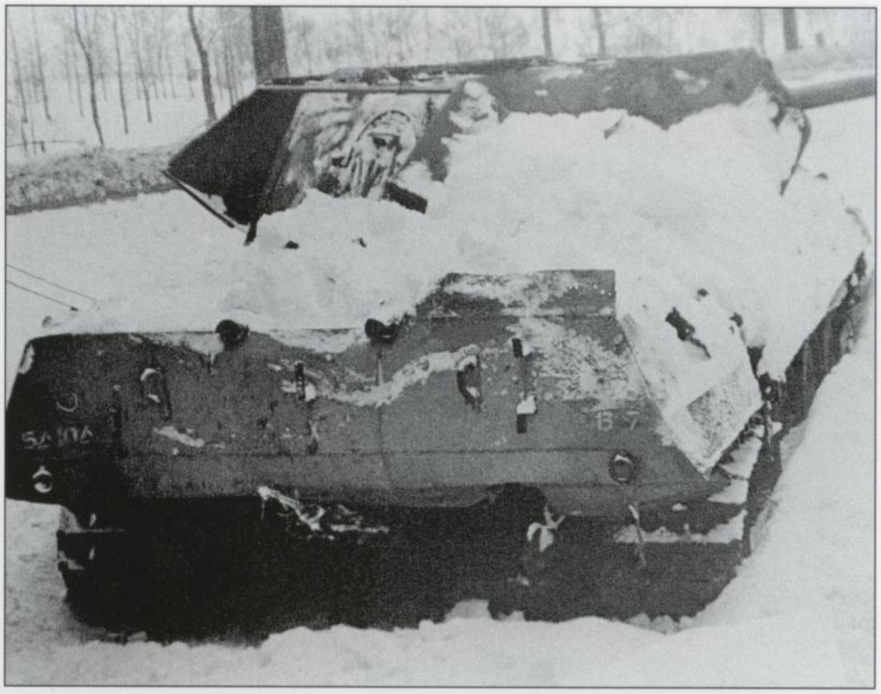


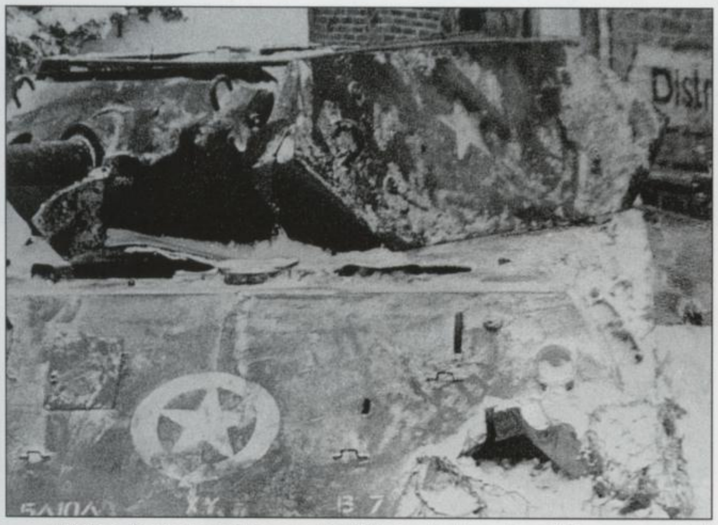
This was the Panther of Lt. Gerstenschlager, bumper code B-10, part of Panzergruppe Mandt, Kampfgruppe Z during the attack on Malmédy on 21 December. With his head outside the turret during the initial attack, Gerstenschlager was fatally wounded by small arms fire. His crew drove the tank back to the Café du Rocher de Falize which was the headquarters of Hauptsturmführer von Foelkersam, the commander of Kampfgruppe Z. The tank was abandoned there later in the day, its barrel poking through the café wall.



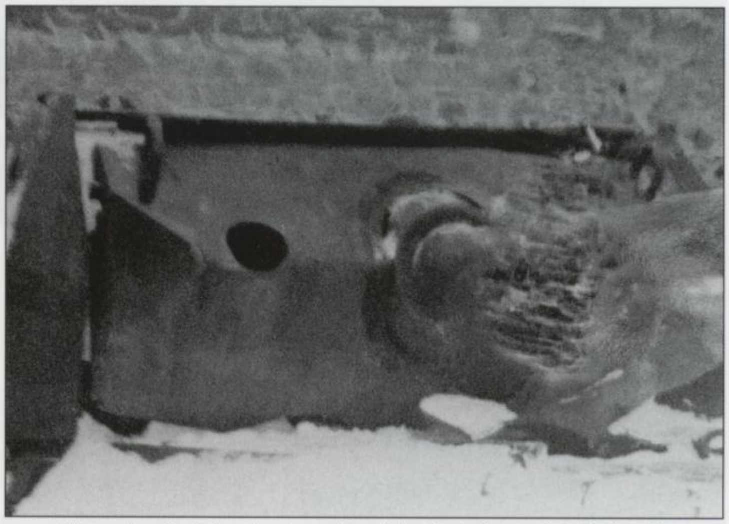
This is the ersatz M10, bumper code B-4, commanded by platoon commander Lt. Mandt. It ran over a mine and was abandoned in front of the positions of Company B, 99th "Norwegian" Separate Infantry Battalion near the Malmédy railroad viaduct. It is seen being removed nearly a month later on 17 January 1945.

This is a rear detail view of one of the ersatz M10s from a US Army intelligence report prepared after the fighting. It shows the sheet metal structure added to the hull and turret rear.

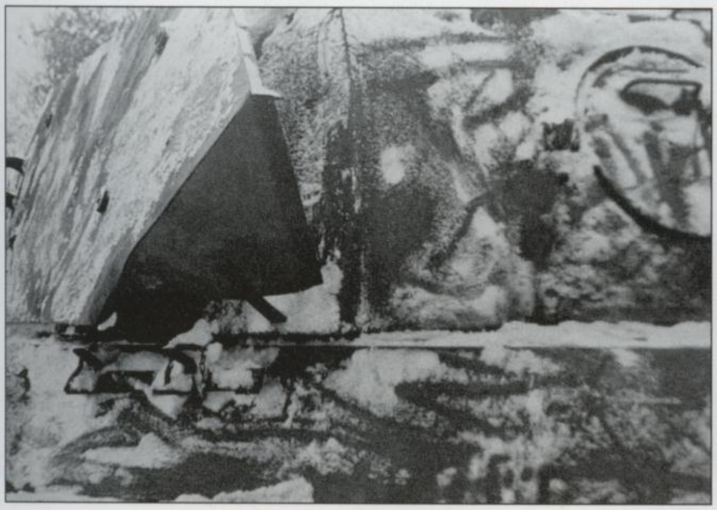




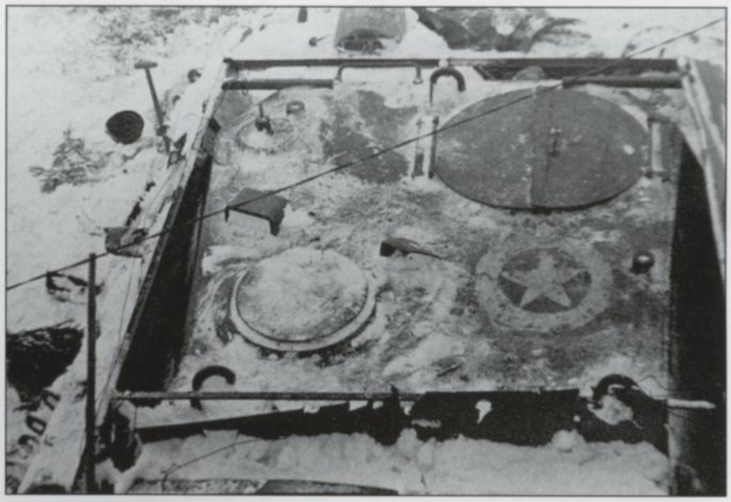
This is a front view of the ersatz M10, tactical number B-7, commanded by Oberfeldwebel Backmann of Pz.Komp. Dreier, Kampfgruppe Z. This tank was knocked out by a bazooka round from a US artillery forward observer, Lt. Snyder. Note that between the false US bumper codes are the XY markings intended to identify Panzer Brigade 150 to German traffic police.



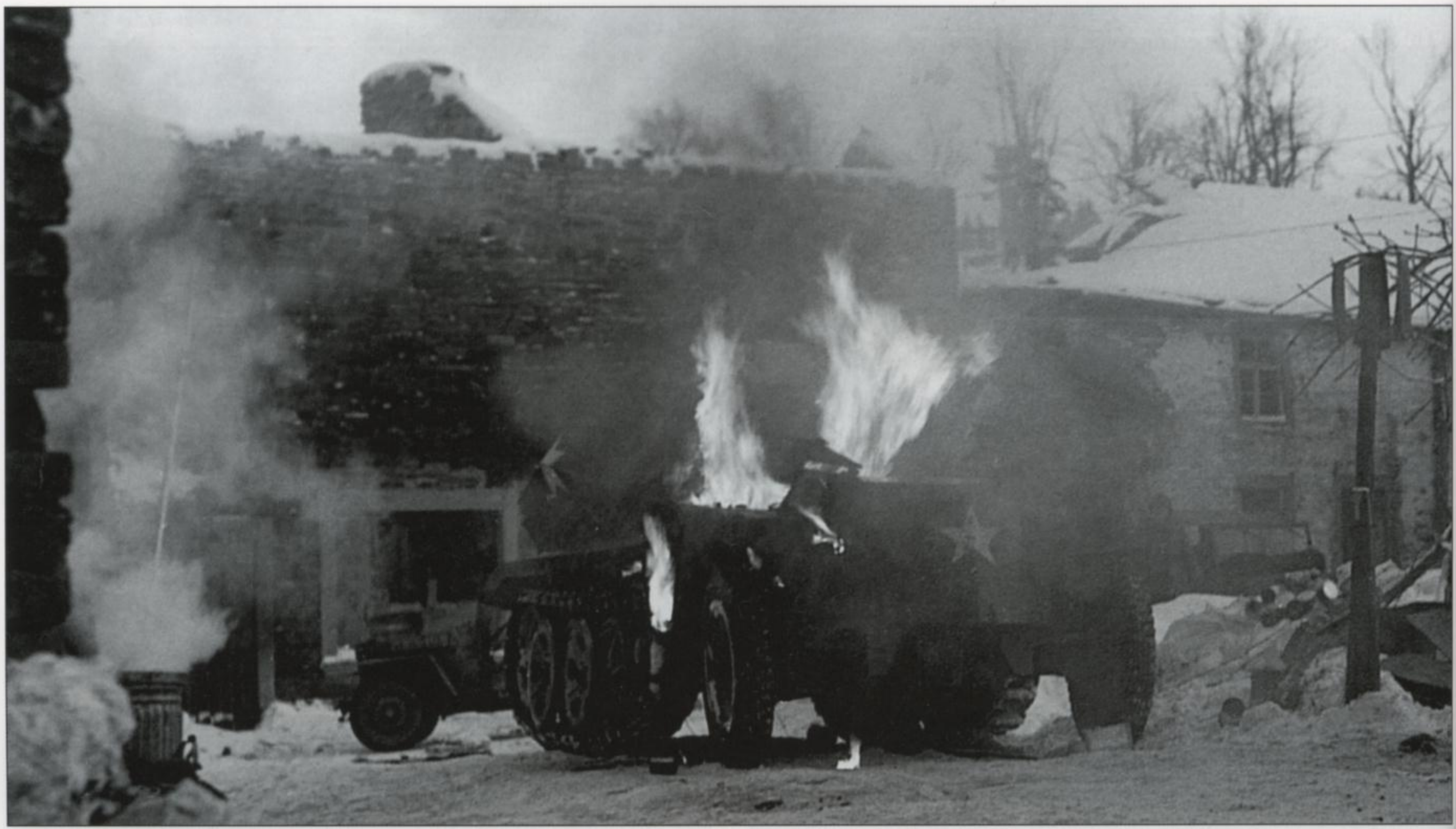
Although not of the best quality, this photo from the US intelligence report shows the sheet metal mantlet cover added over the Panther's mantlet in the hopes of creating the false impression of an American M10 tank destroyer.



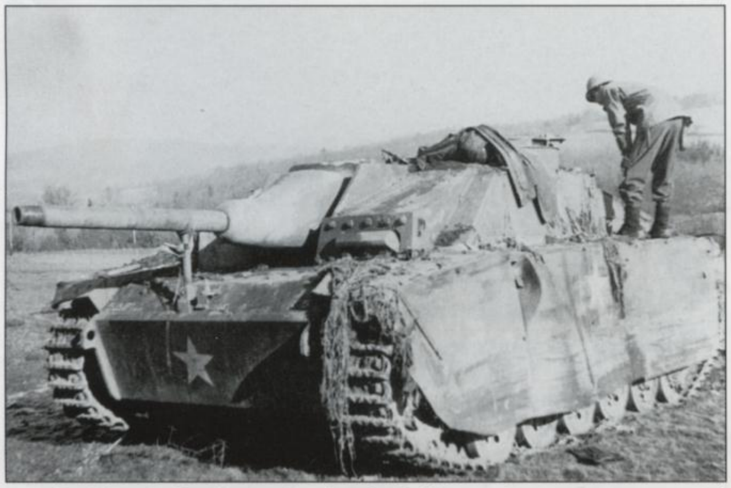
This detail shot shows the rear left corner of the turret, showing details of the attachment of the false side armor on the ersatz M10.



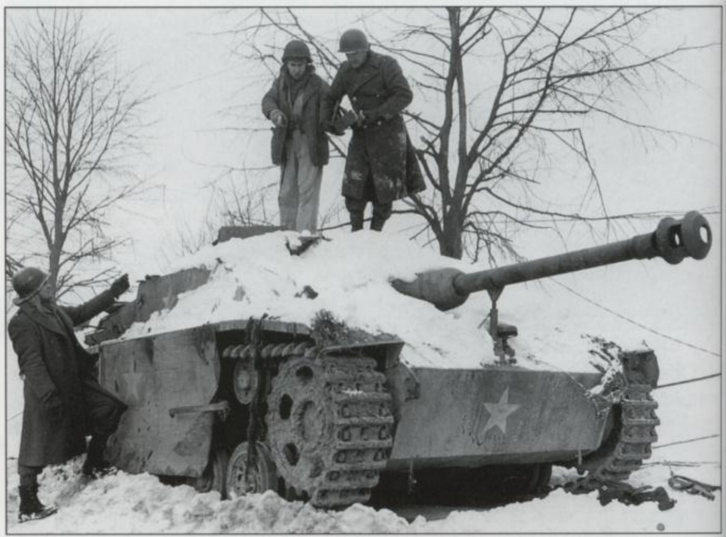
This overhead shot shows the changes to the Panther turret, especially the substitution of a simple split hatch for the normal cupola. This was a source of complaint during training at Grafenwohr, as the crews felt it offered too little protection for the tank commander.



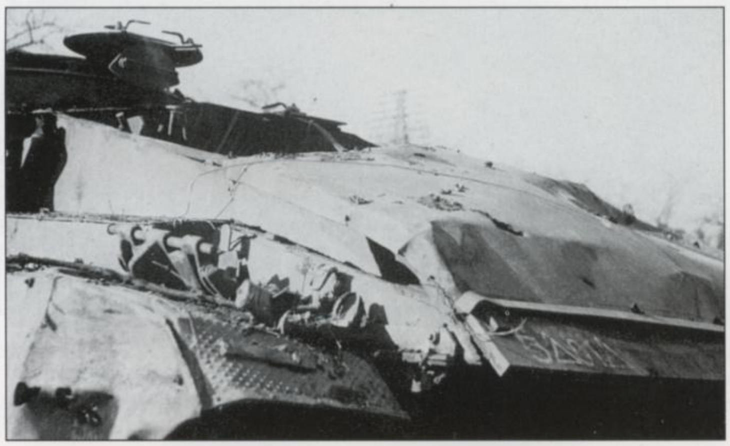
Due to a shortage of captured US equipment, Panzer Brigade 150 used other types of German equipment, simply painted in olive green with American stars. This SdKfz 250 was captured by US troops while still on fire.



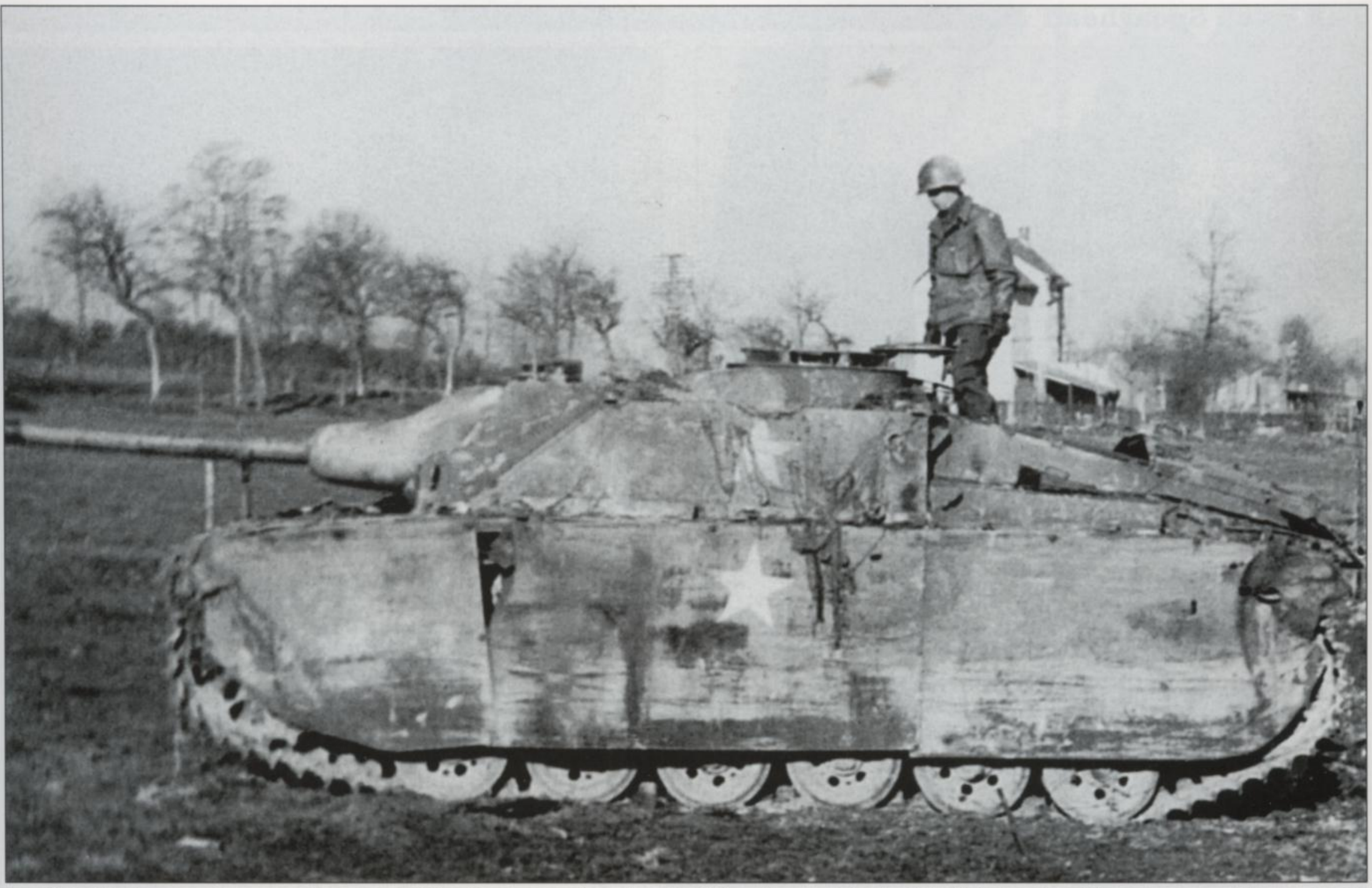
Besides the Panther tanks, five StuG III assault guns were converted for Panzer Brigade 150. Since they bore no resemblance at all to any US vehicle, their camouflage seems rather odd. The muzzle brake was removed, and side skirts added. This one was abandoned near the Baugnez crossroads, site of the infamous Malmédy massacre.



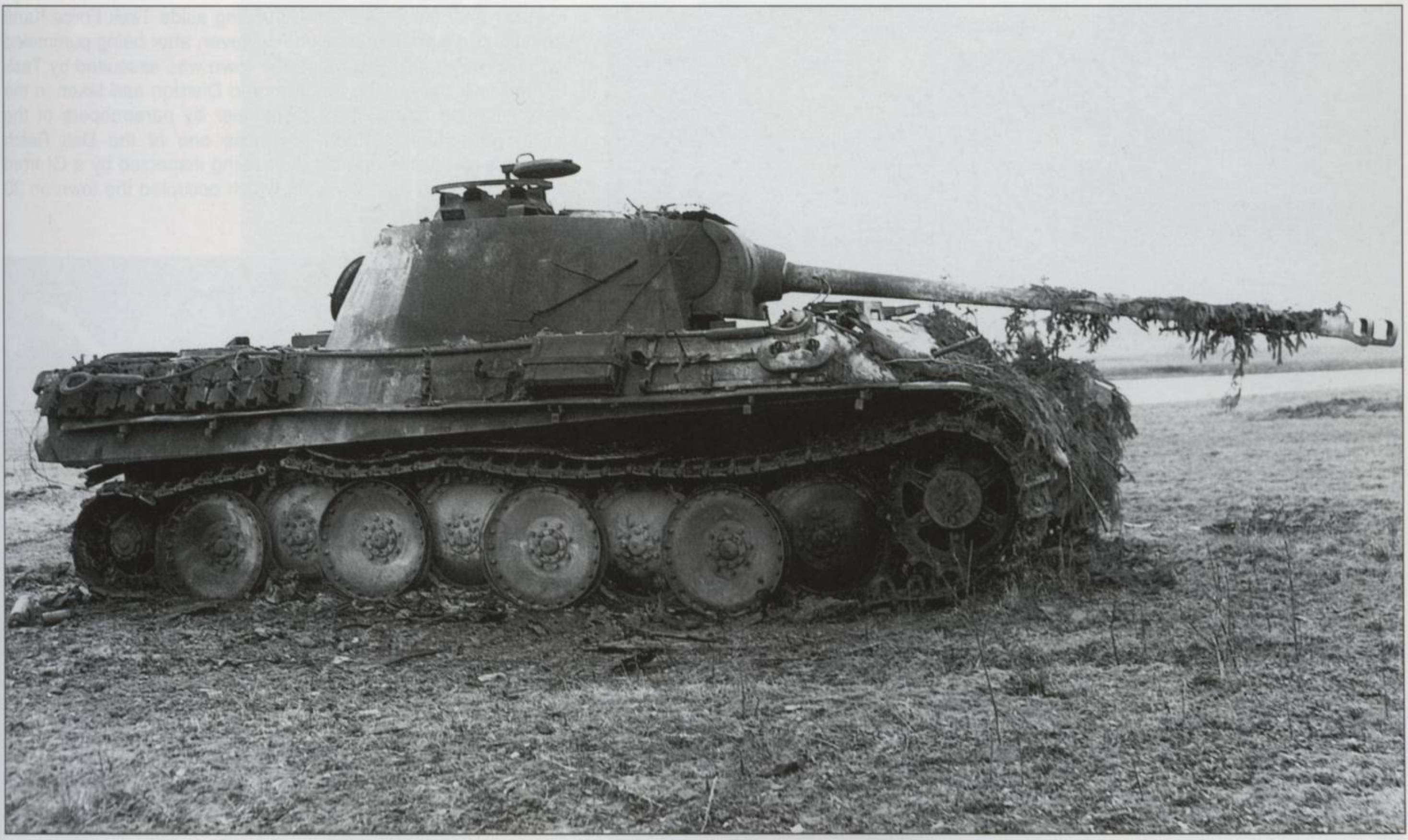
This Stug III of Panzer Brigade 150 was abandoned and booby trapped following the failed attack on Malmédy. Here, some troops from the 291st Combat Engineer Battalion are attempting to remove the booby-traps. Mud has obscured the tactical markings on the vehicle, but the false US stars are still plainly evident.



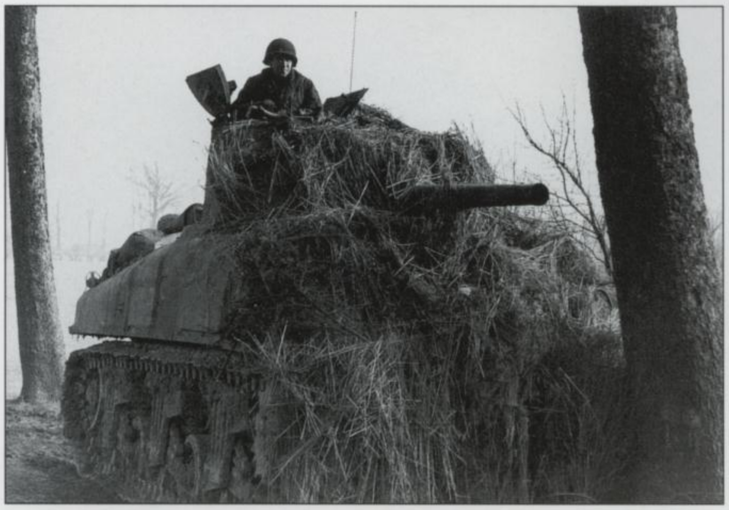
For unknown reasons, a false engine deck was added to the StuG III conversions. In the lower left corner, the false bumper codes are evident, identifying the vehicle as belonging to the 5th Armored Division, which was not in the Ardennes at the time!



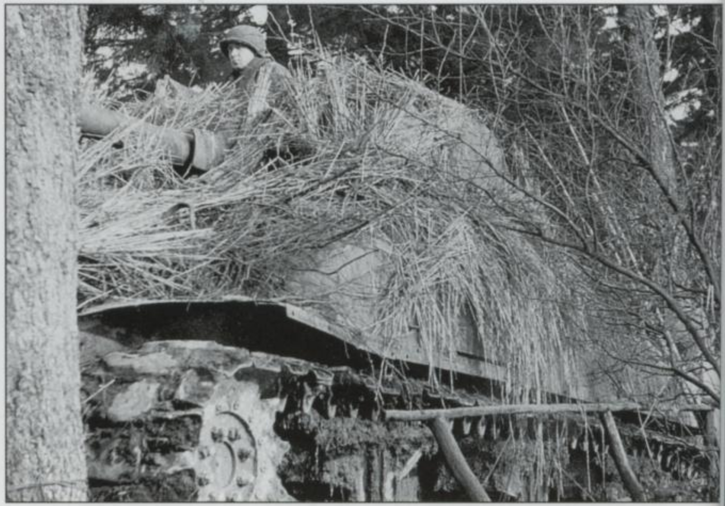
This side view provides a good overview of the changes made to the StuG III for Panzer Brigade 150. Unfortunately, it bears no resemblance at all to any American armored vehicle, in spite of its white stars.



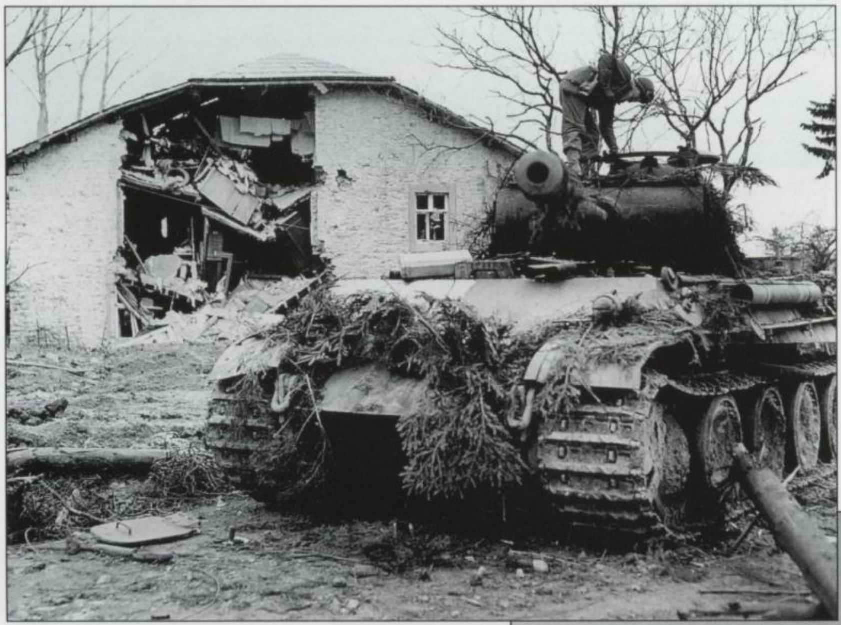
A Panther Ausf. G of the 1.SS-Panzer Division knocked out in the fighting near the Baugnez cross-roads where the infamous massacre took place. It has been burned out, but the tactical number 111 is barely evident on the turret side. This is a new production vehicle with the revised chin mantlet and crew heater.



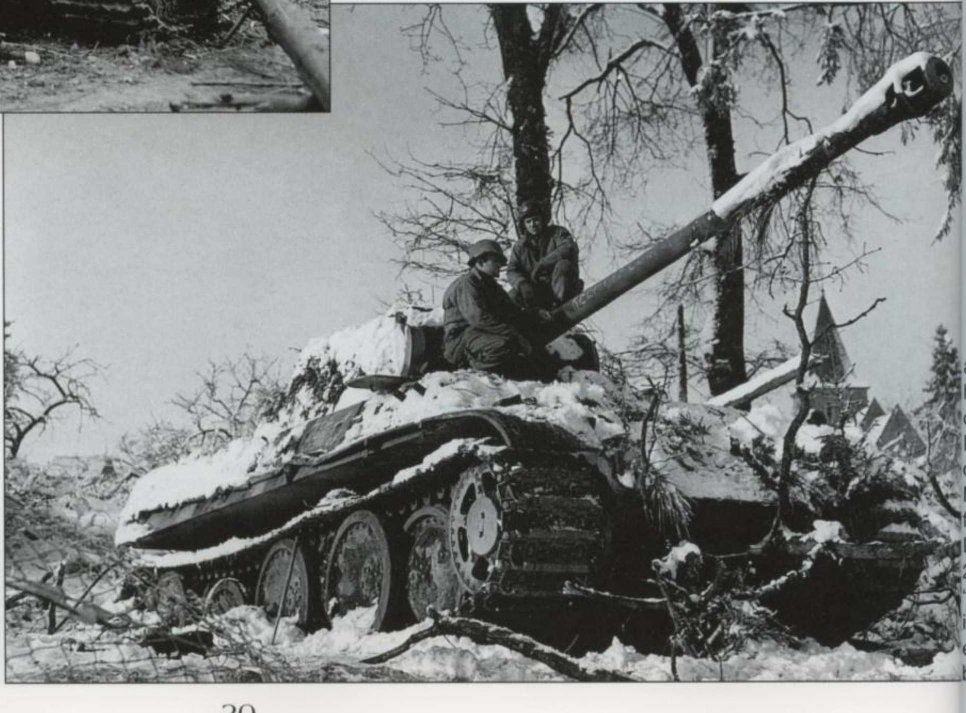
With the eastern approaches to the Meuse blocked and I.SS-Panzer Corps stopped, the II.SS-Panzer Corps was shifted to the center of the Bulge to support Manteuffel's attack. Much of the fighting centered around the town of Manhay, astride one of the more valuable road junctions. This M4A1 medium tank of the 3rd Armored Division was positioned on the N494 road going west from Manhay on 23 December 1944 in an attempt to halt the advance of the 2.SS-Panzer Division "Das Reich". It is covered with straw for improvised camouflage.



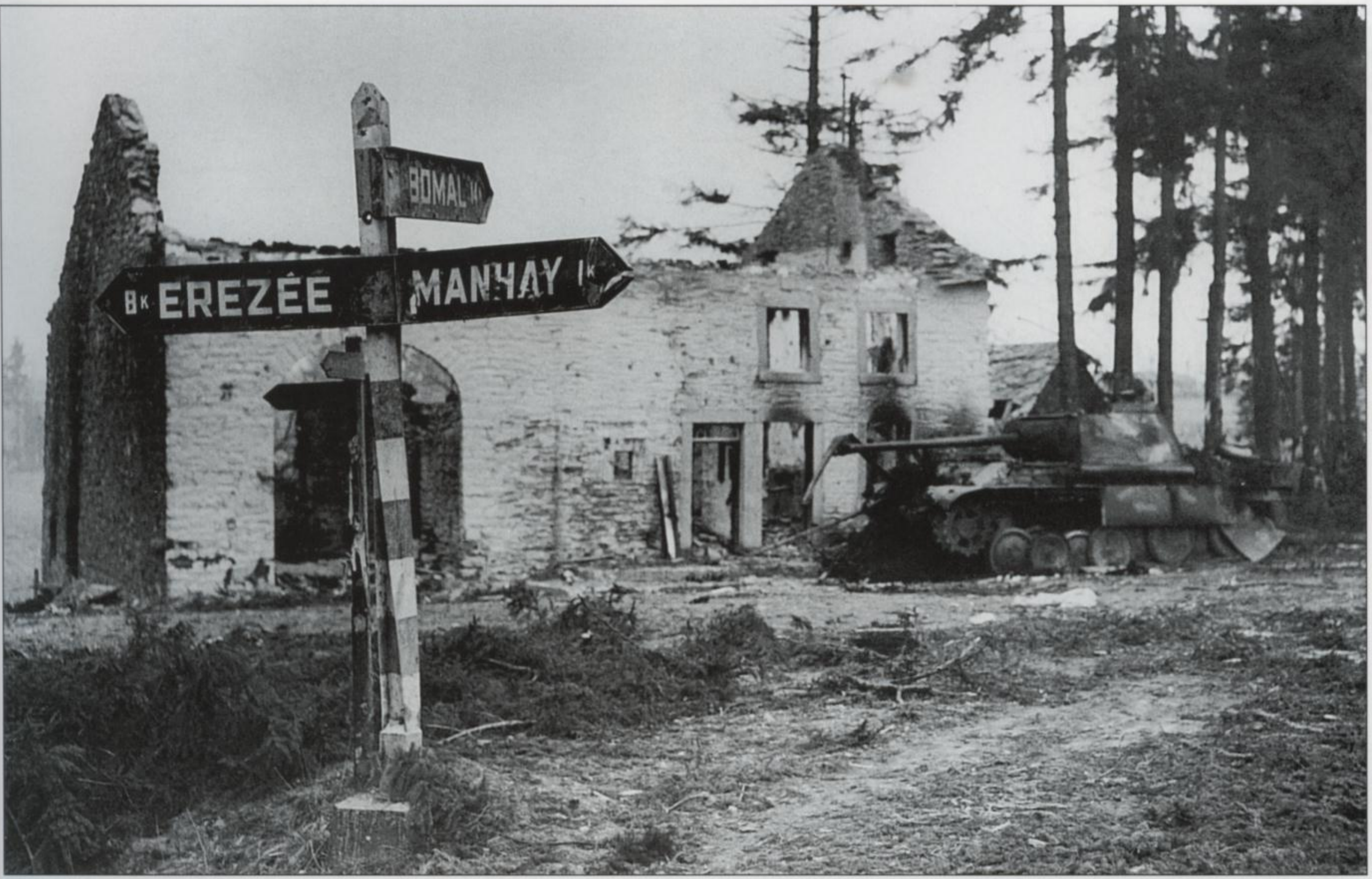
Another view of the 3rd Armored Division M4A1 from Task Force Kane along the Manhay road. These roadblocks were eventually overcome by assaults by the Das Reich. The 4/SS-Panzer Regt. 2 of the 2.SS-Panzer Division attacked Manhay on 23 December, knocking out several M4 medium tanks of the 7th Armored Division in the process.



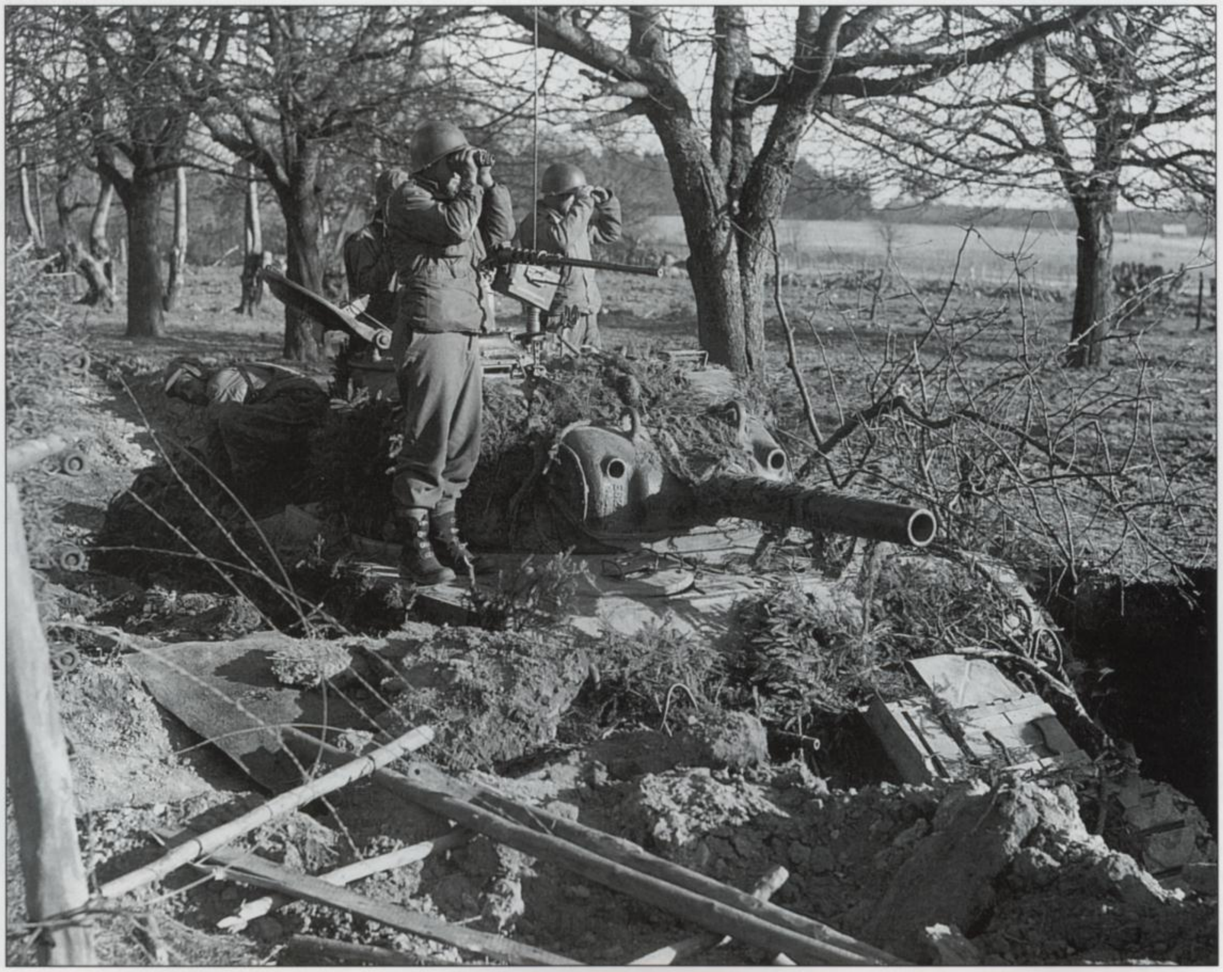
On Christmas eve, the 2.SS-Panzer Division swept through Manhay and into Grandmenil, pushing aside Task Force Kane from the 3rd Armored Division. However, after being pummeled by air strike on 26 December, the town was assaulted by Task Force McGeorge of the 3rd Armored Division and taken in the early morning hours of 27 December by paratroopers of the 517th Parachute Infantry. This was one of the Das Reich Panthers lost in the fighting. It is being inspected by a GI from 3/289th Infantry, 75th Division, which occupied the town on 30 December 1944.



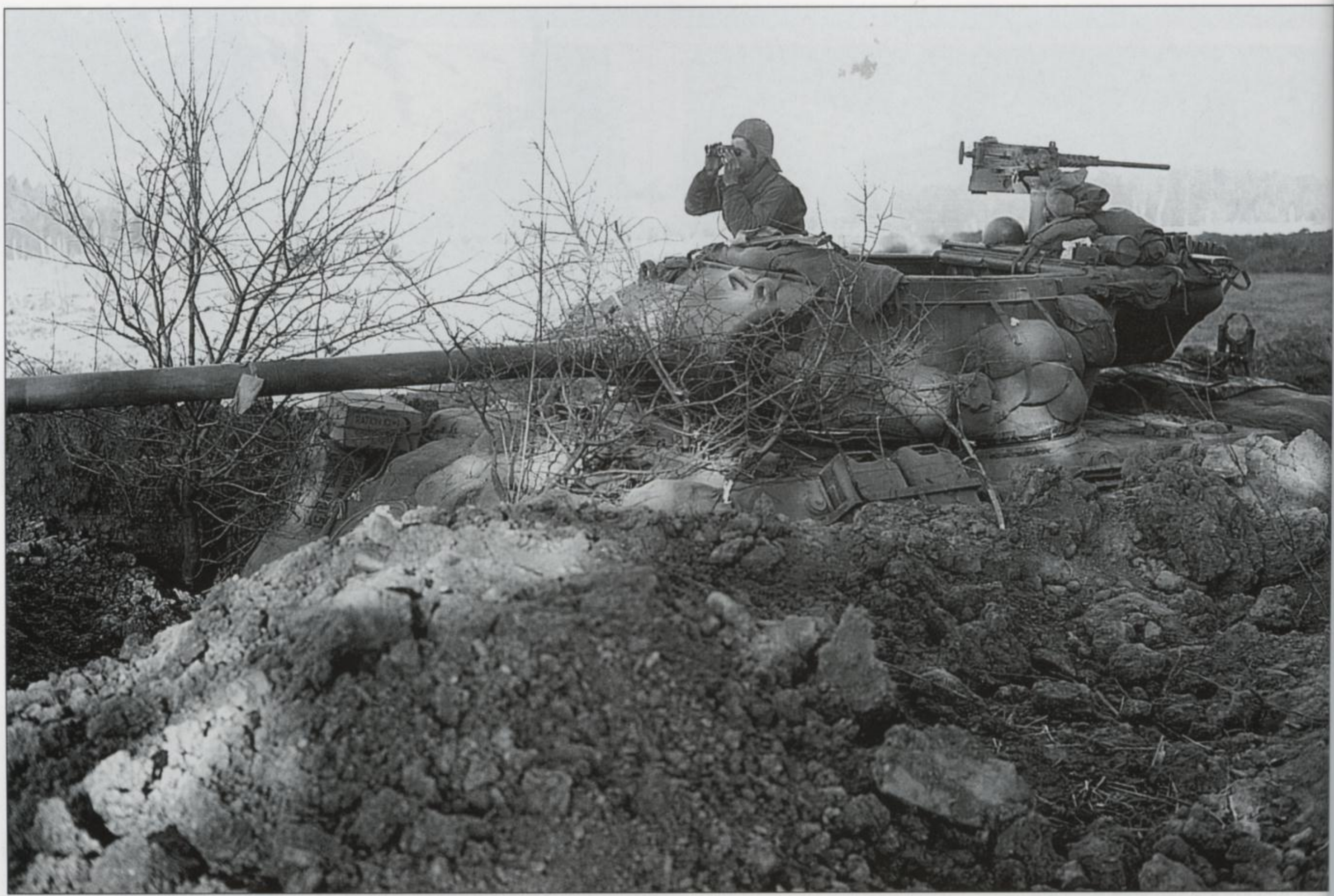
GIs inspect another of the Panther Ausf. G tanks of the 2.SS-Panzer Division knocked out during the fighting in Grandmenil with the 3rd Armored Division. This photo was taken several days after the battle on 4 January after snow had covered the area.



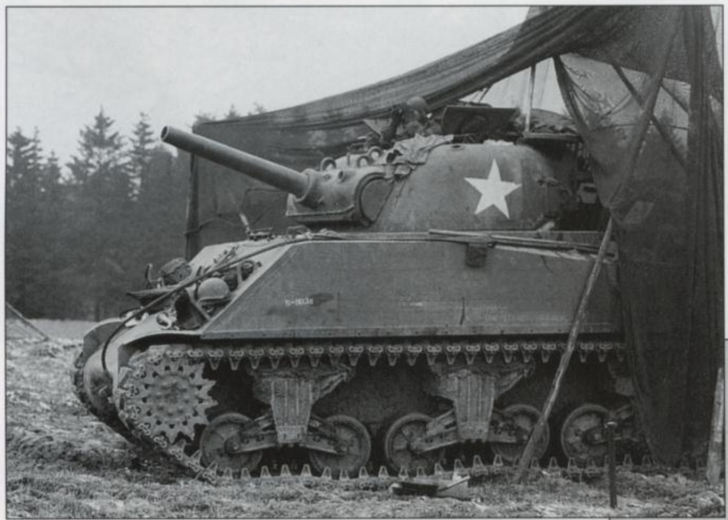
Another Panther Ausf. G of 2.SS-Panzer Division knocked out in a fork in the road between Manhay and Grandmenil during the fighting on 23 December 1944 with the 3rd Armored Division.



A M4 (105mm) assault gun of a headquarters company of the 7th Armored Division waits in hull down position near Manhay during the fighting there on 27 December with the 2.SS-Panzer Division "Das Reich". The tank is positioned in an entrenchment created by divisional engineers.

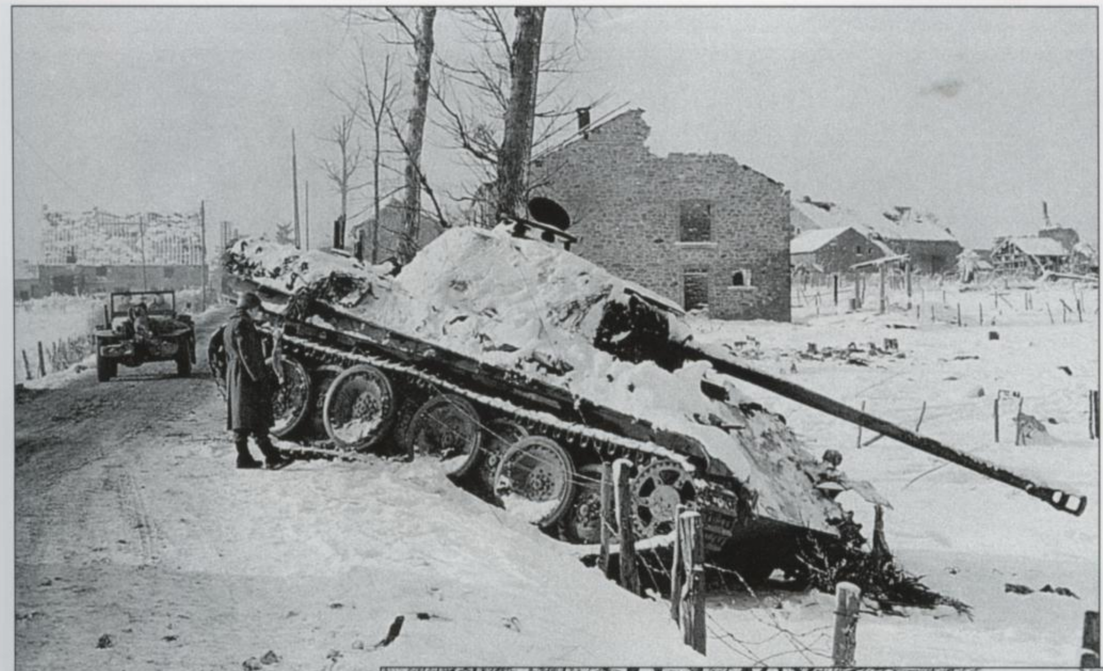


A well entrenched M36 90mm gun motor carriage of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion holds positions near Manhay on 27 December 1944 during th fighting with Das Reich.

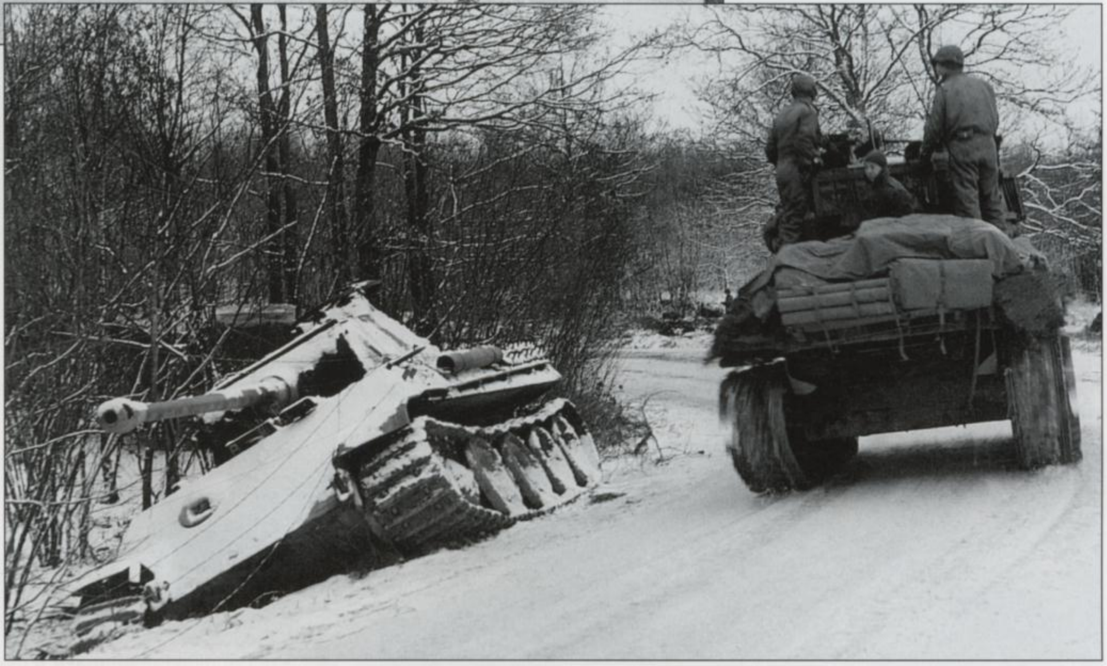


The M4 (105mm) assault guns of the headquarters company of th 750th Tank Battalion provide covering fire to forward US positions a Manhay on 30 December 1944.

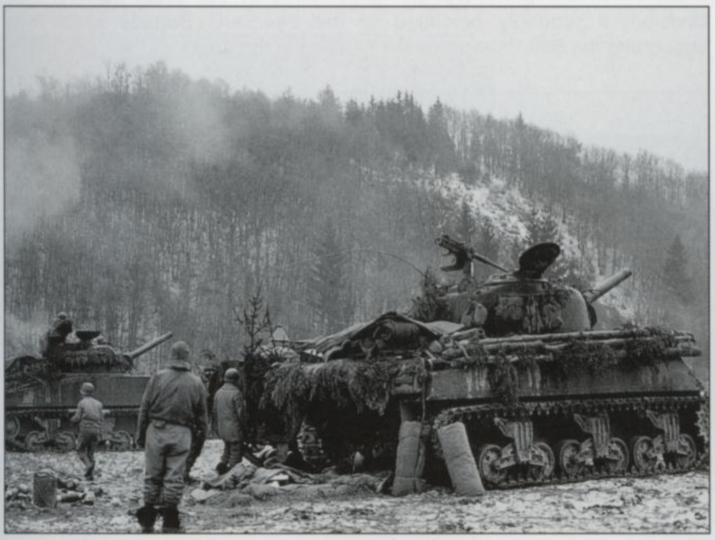
The crew of a M10 tank destroyer of Company B, 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion warm up around a fire near Manhay on 4 January 1945. This battalion was one of a number of units taking part in the efforts to block the 2.SS-Panzer Division's retreat from a pocket around Grandmenil and Manhay on 26-27 December. One M10 crew was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously for stopping a column of 14 Panthers.



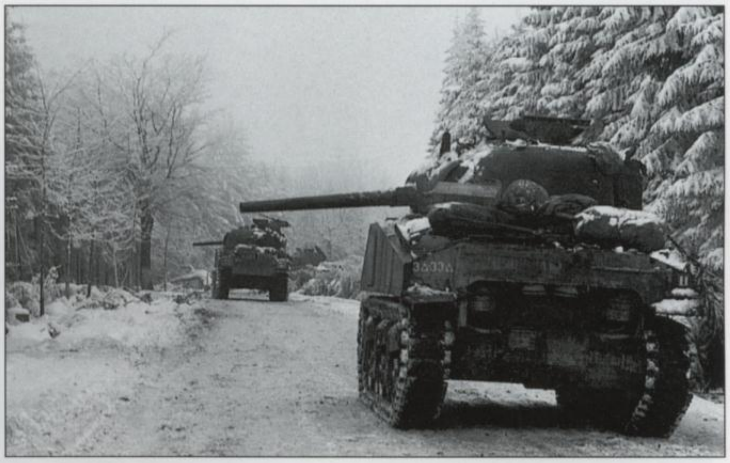
This particular Panther Ausf. G of Das Reich was one of several lost in the fighting at Manhay on the road from Trois Ponts, and is being inspected by US troops in early January after the town was retaken.



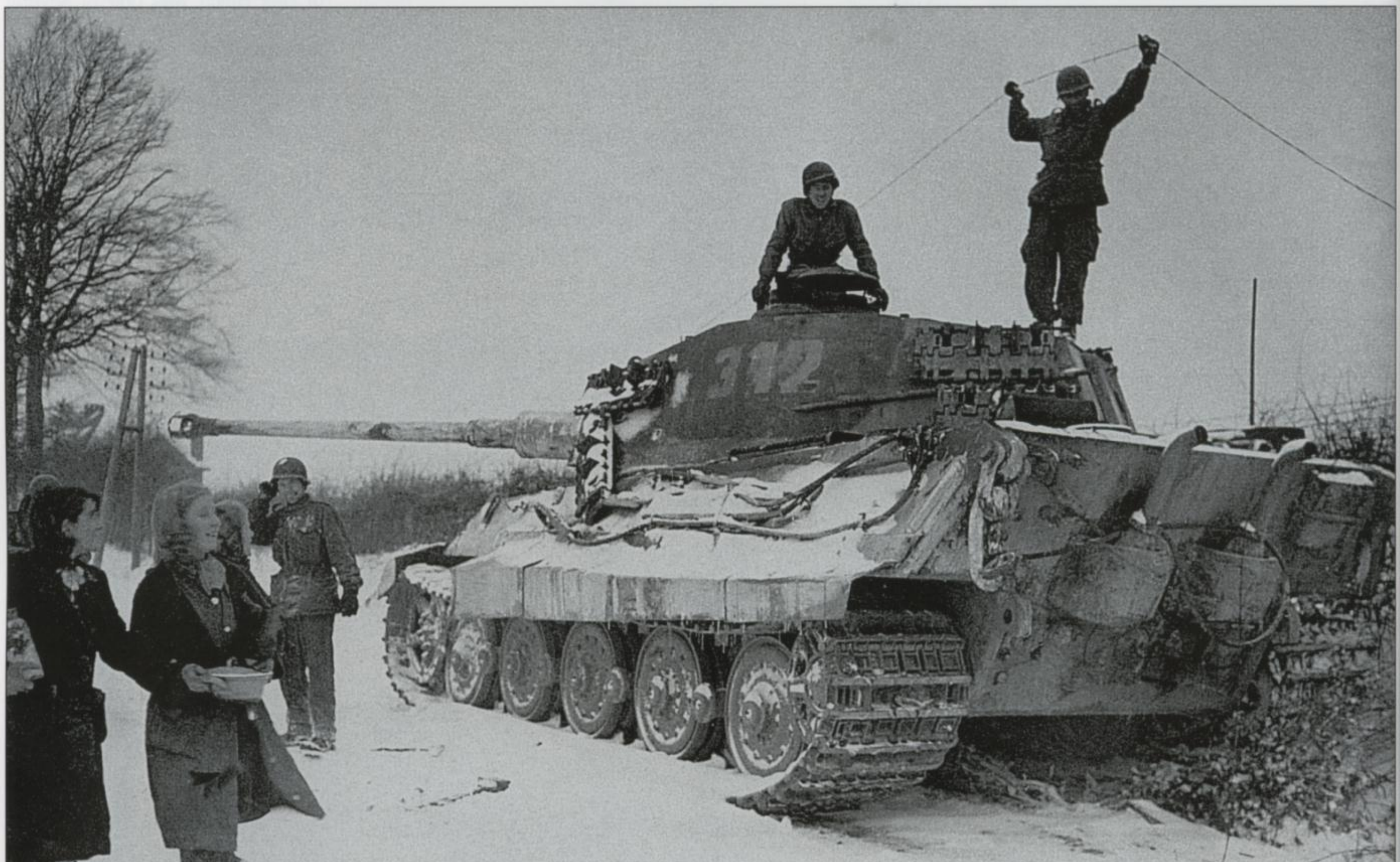
A M4 (76mm) of the 2nd Armored Division passes by an abandoned Panther Ausf. G of the 2.SS-Panzer Division lost during the fighting near Grandmenil at the end of December 1944.



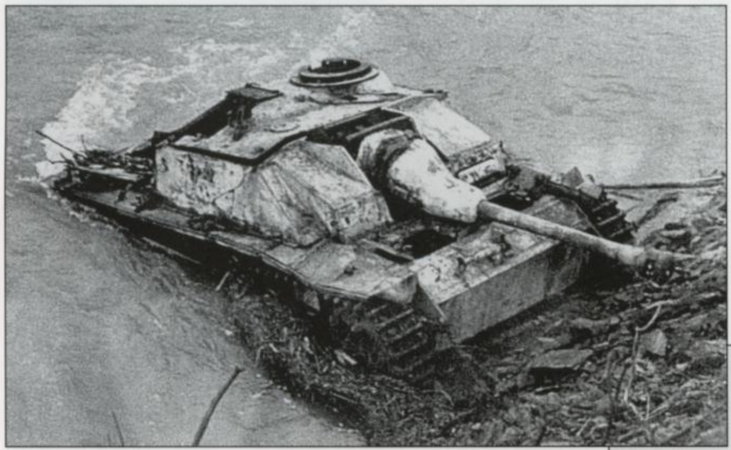
The M4 (105mm) assault guns of the headquarters company of 2/32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division provide fire support during operations around Trou-de-Bra on 3 January 1945.



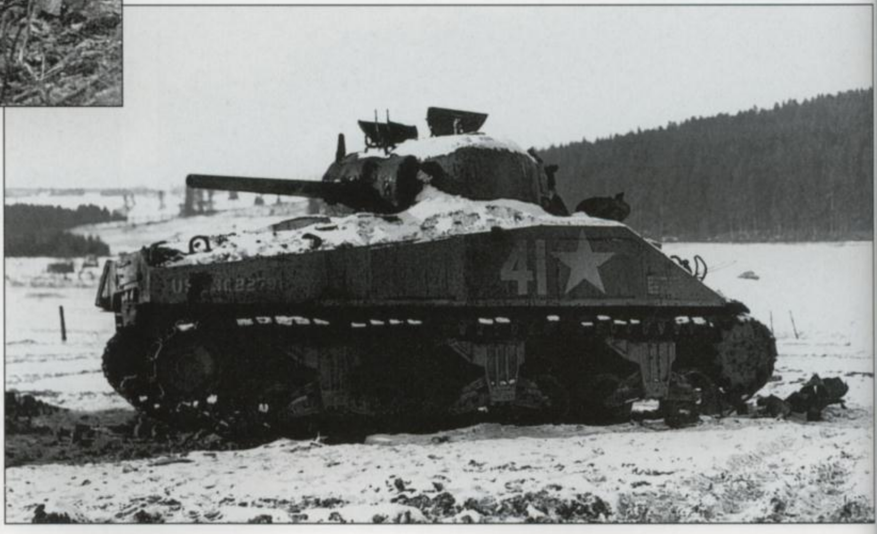
By early January, the snow had settled in throughout Belgium, making mobile operations all the more difficult. The 3rd Armored Division continued in its efforts to reduce the northern edge of the bulge around Manhay towards Houfallize. These two M4 medium tanks of 33rd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division train their guns on the woods while a tank up ahead is recovered.



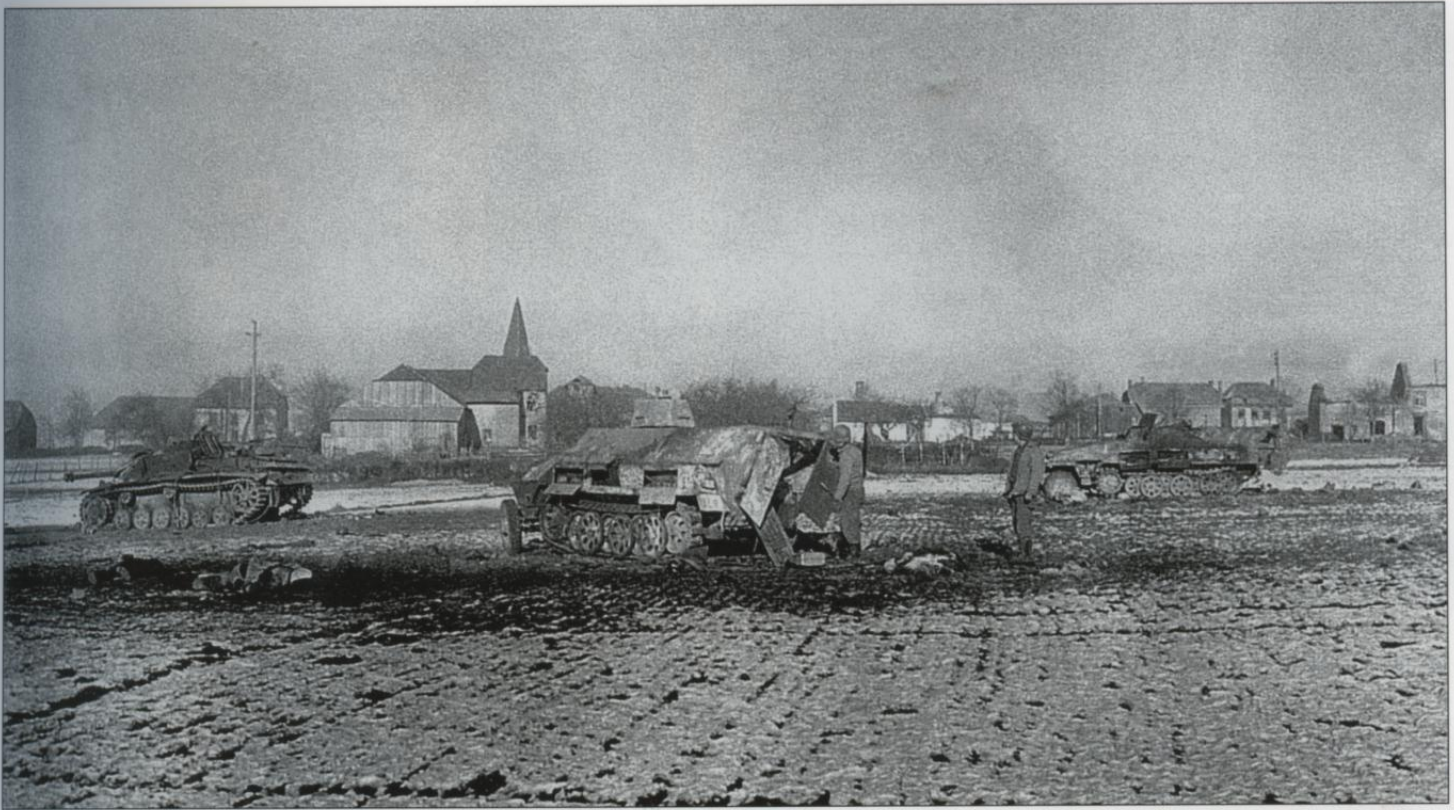
The German Seventh Army forces attacking Bastogne were almost devoid of tanks at the outset of the campaign. Gradually, more armored strength was shifted to this sector in hopes of securing a breakthrough to the Meuse. On Christmas day, King Tiger number 312 of 3/s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501 was abandoned near Engelsdorf. It was later claimed by the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Here on 8 January 1945, some GIs are using it to string communication wire while a group of Belgian school girls pass by.



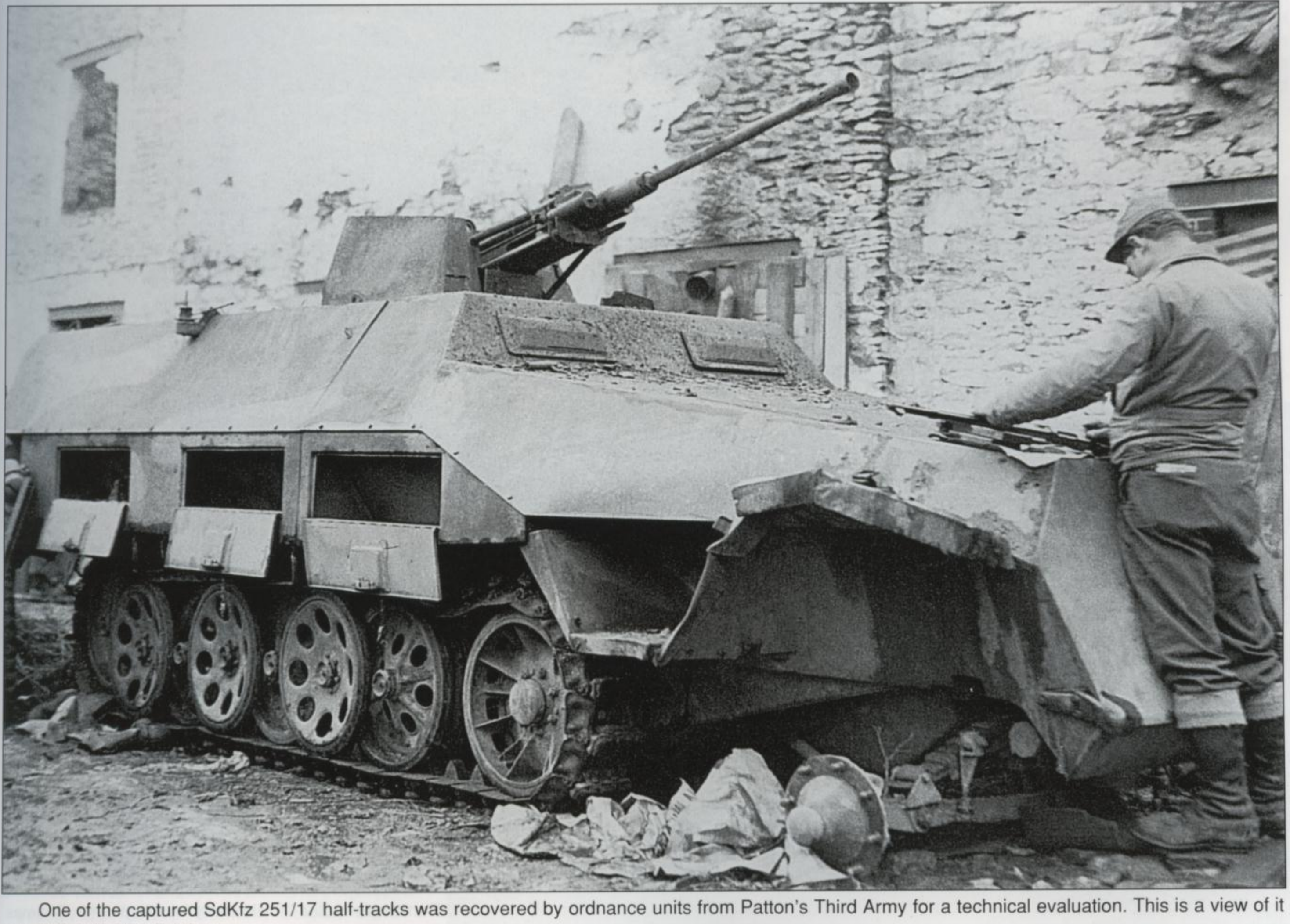
The initial attacks in the center of the front had to cross several rivers. This StuG III didn't quite make it over the north bank of the Our River near Welchenhausen, which was being defended by the 112th Infantry, 28th Division. It probably belonged to the 244.StuG Brigade which was supporting the 560.Volksgrenadier Division in the area.



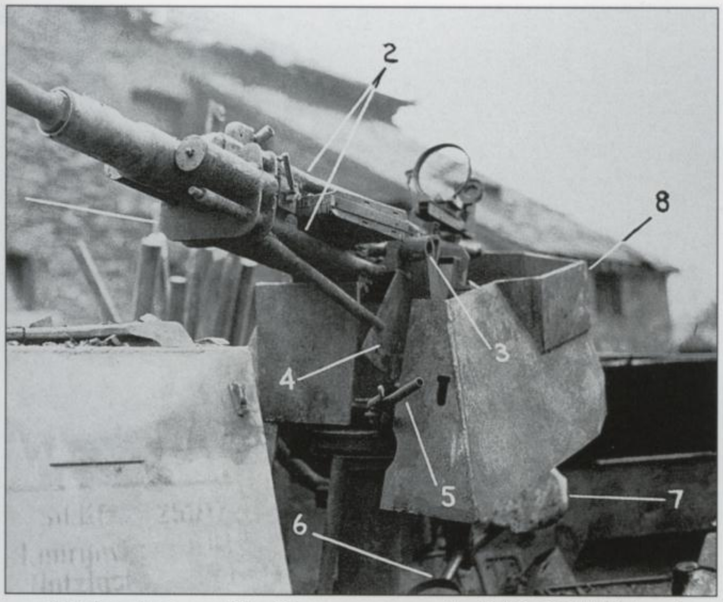
The Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division was trapped inside the Bastogne pocket along with the 101st Airborne Division. The CCB was divided up into several task forces, defending along the southern perimeter of the town. This M4 served with Task Force O'Hara, and was knocked out during fighting in January near Mageret.



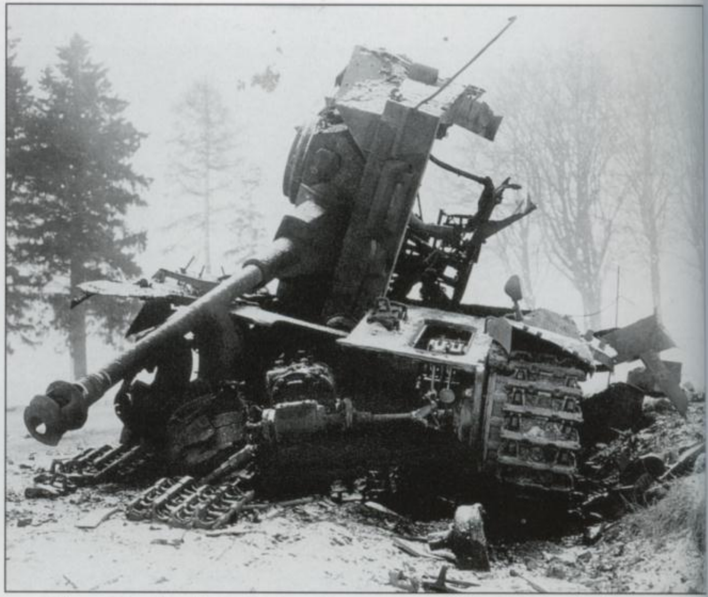
The Führer-Grenadier-Brigade was committed piecemeal to the fighting near Bastogne, and one of its kampfgruppe attacked the US 80th Division in Heiderscheid on Christmas Eve 1944. It suffered significant losses in the fighting, including the StuG III to the left and two SdKfz 251 half-tracks. The half-track in the center is one of the rare SdKfz 251/17 with a turret 2cm autocannon.



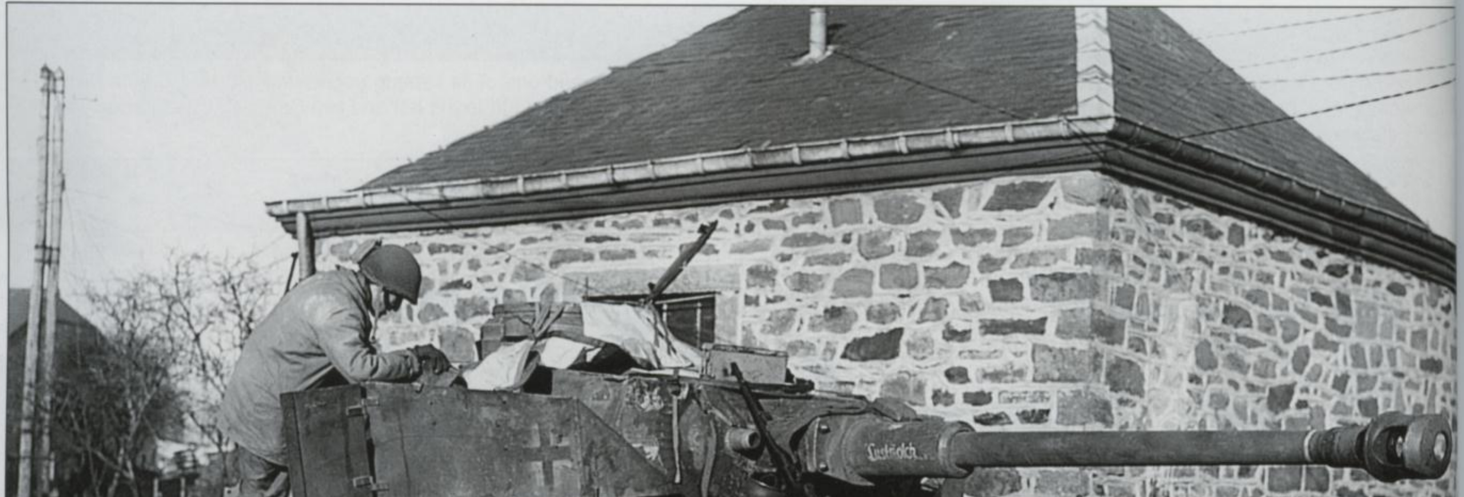
One of the captured SdKfz 251/17 half-tracks was recovered by ordnance units from Patton's Third Army for a technical evaluation. This is a view of it sometime after the fighting.



This is a close-up of the 20mm cannon on the SdKfz 251/17 taken from a technical report. The armored cover has been taken off to show details of the gun mounting.



The catastrophic effects of an ammunition fire and the resultant explosion are all too evident from the shattered hulk of this PzKpfw IV of Kampfgruppe Maucke, 15.Panzergrenadier Division knocked out in the outskirts of Bastogne in late December 1944 during a fight with paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division.



This PzKpfw IV Ausf. H or J named Lustmolch (Happy Salamander) of Kampfgruppe Maucke, 15.Panzergrenadier Division was knocked out in Champs on the approaches to Bastogne in an encounter with the 502nd Parachute Regiment, 101st Airborne Division on 26 December 1944.

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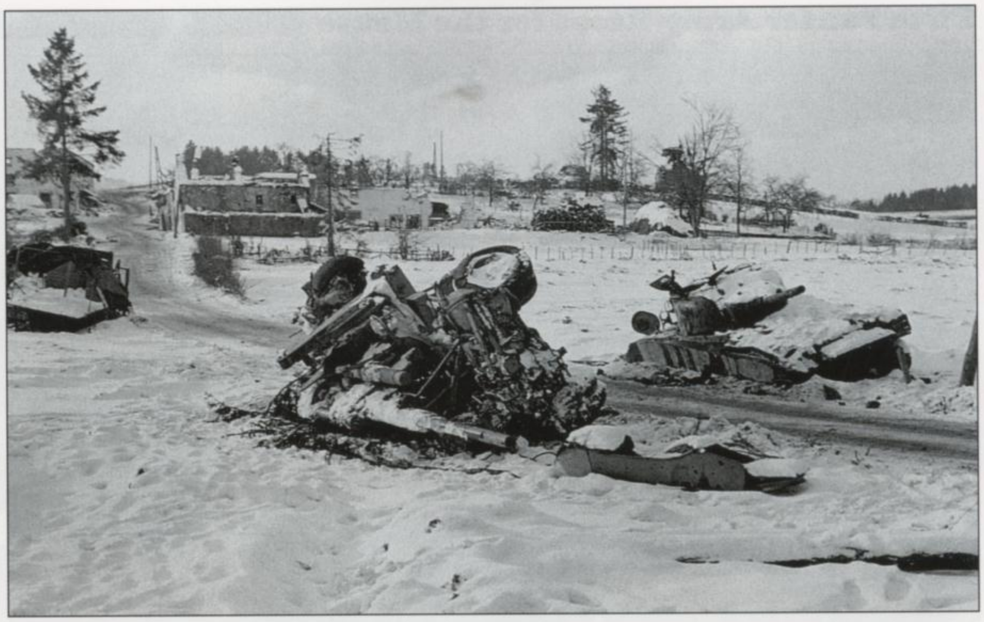
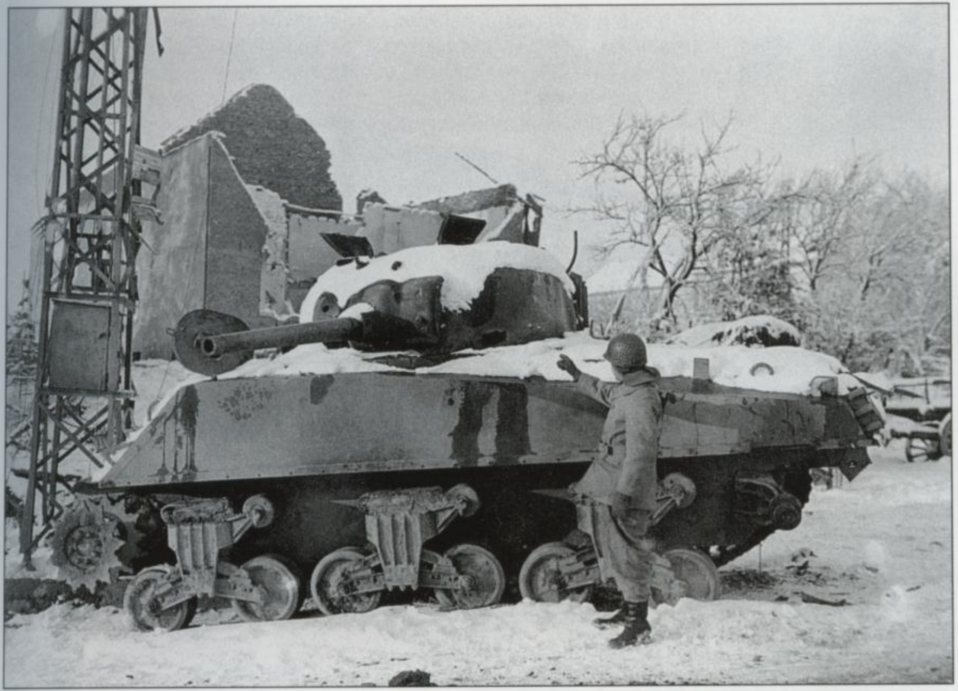
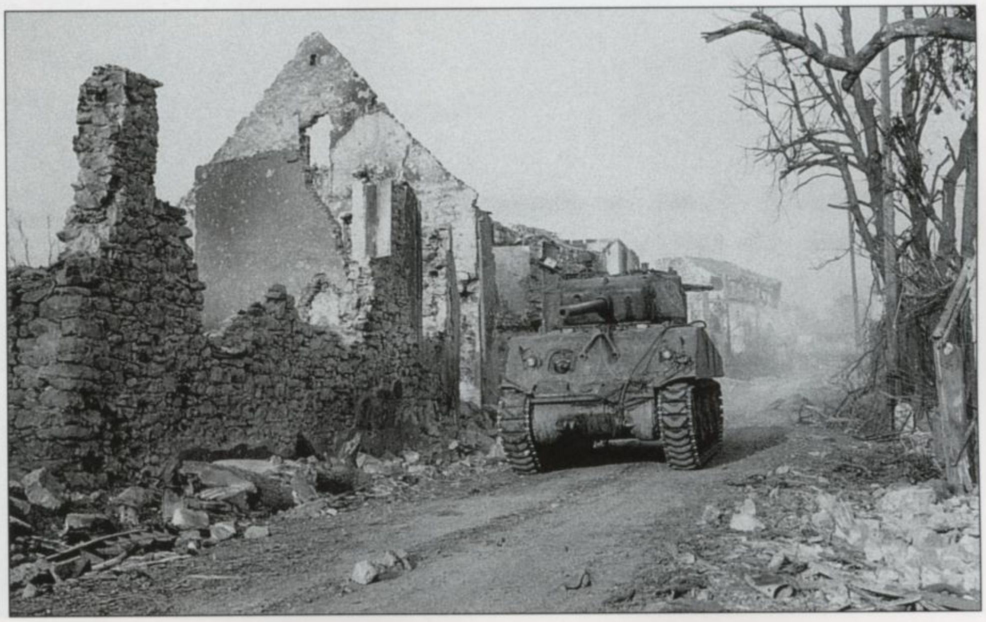
The approaches to the village of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau, a small village on the southern edge of Bastogne, are littered with the debris of war, including a German 88mm Flak 36 and a US M4 medium tank, probably from 10th Armored Division which fought in this sector.



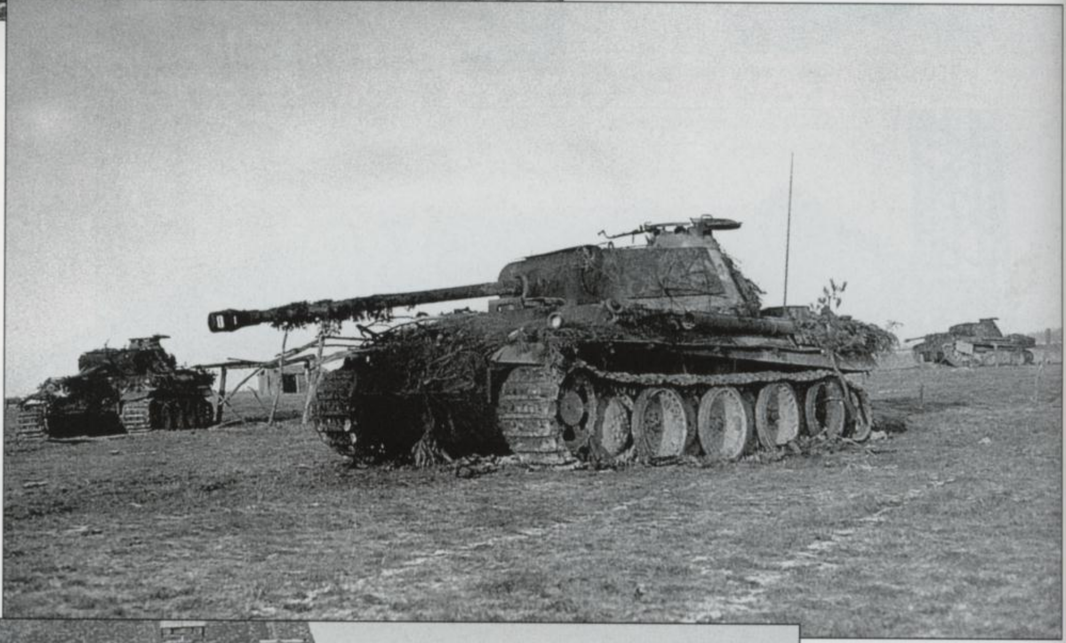


This M4A3 from the 6th Armored Division was knocked out in Hompre on the outskirts of Bastogne during the attempts to relieve the city in late December 1944. The GI is pointing to where a large caliber anti-tank gun round penetrated the base of the turret.



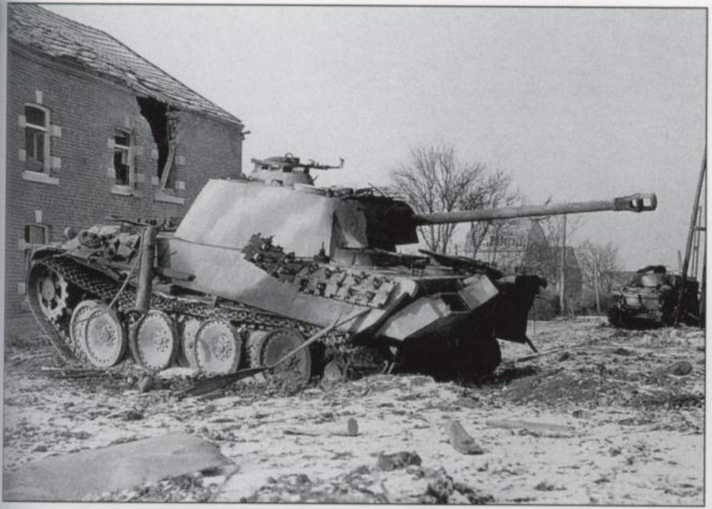
A M4A3 (76mm) medium tank passes through the ruins of Benwihr, Belgium on 27 December 1944.

A 3-inch anti-tank gun lays wrecked at a cross-roads outside Humain after it was put out of action by a German tank a few days after Christmas. This particular gun was credited with knocking out 15 German tanks during the intense fighting around Humain against 9.Panzer Division.

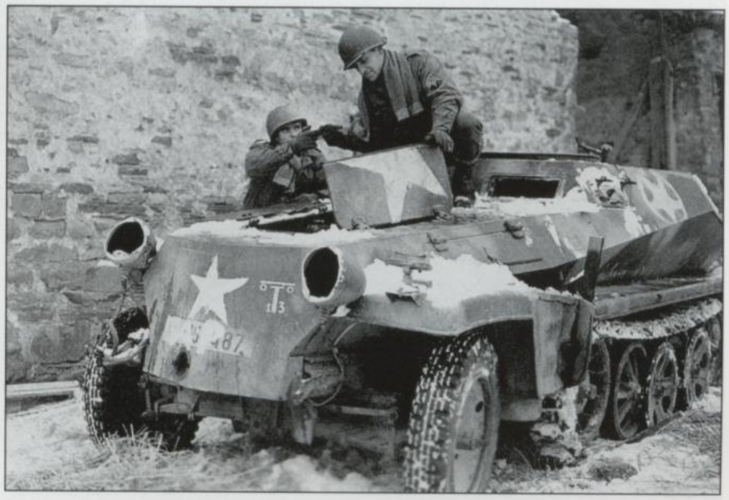


A trio of Panther Ausf. G lay abandoned in a field outside Humain, Belgium on 28 December 1944. The 9.Panzer Division attempted to defend the town against an attack by the US 2nd Armored Division, but was ejected after a fierce ten-hour battle on 27 December.

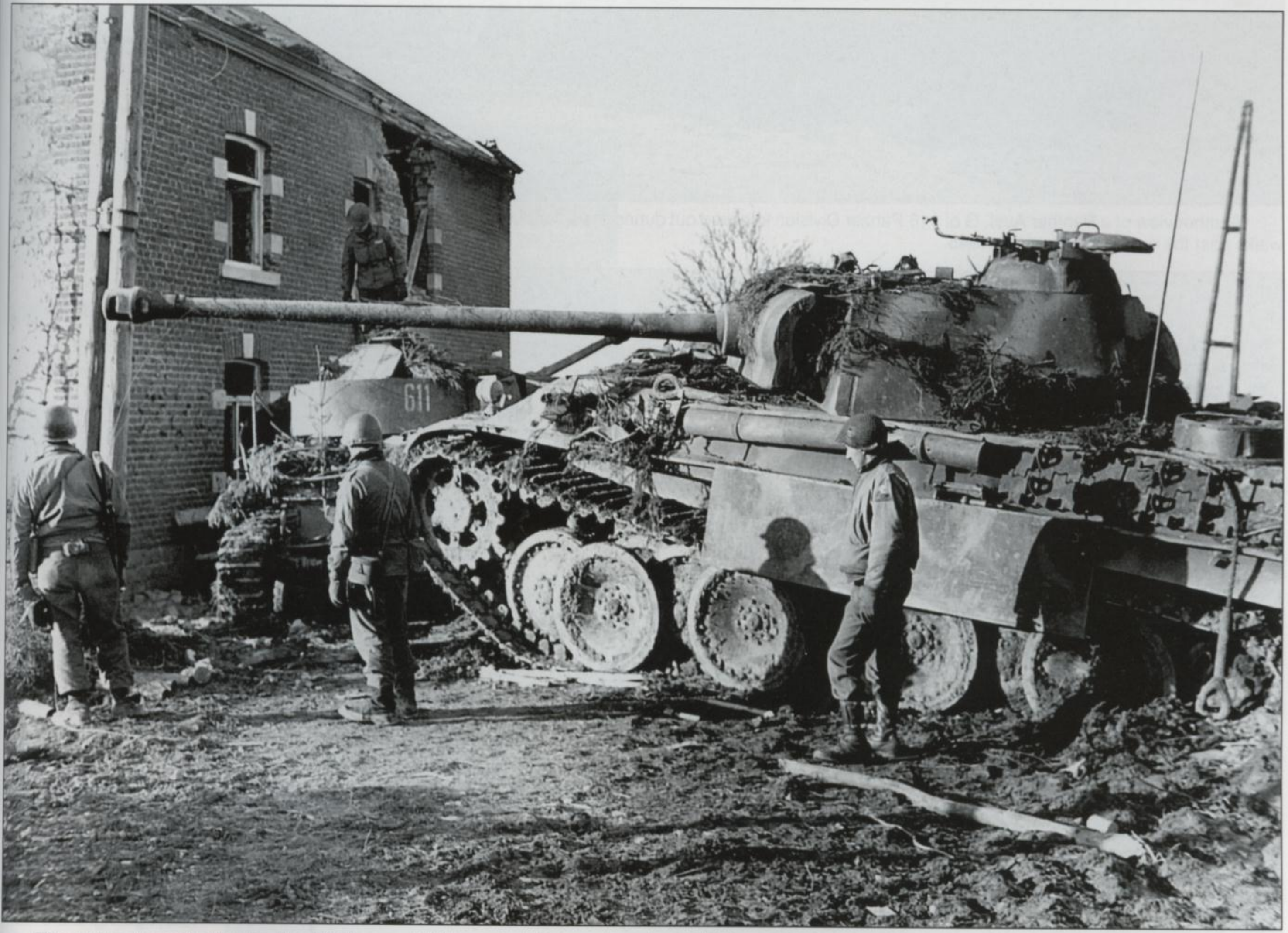
Another Panther Ausf. G of 9.Panzer Division is inspected by GIs of the 83rd Division the day after the battle there. The 9.Panzer Division lost 16 Panthers during the Battle of the Bulge, about a third its strength.



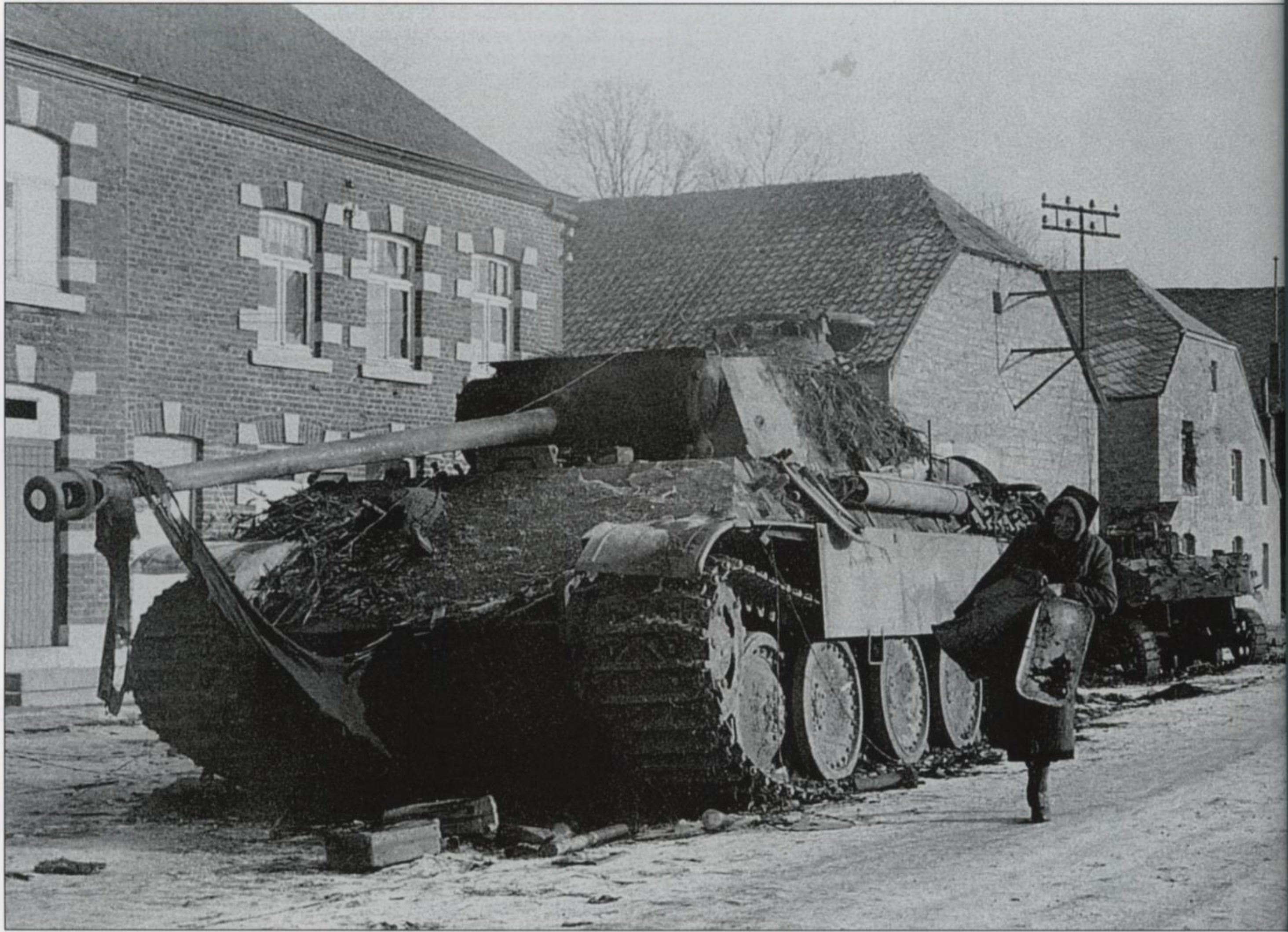
A Panther Ausf. G of 116.Panzer Division during the fighting for Hotton on 26 December with a PzKpfw IV, tactical number 611, in the background. The Panther is a new production tank built no earlier than October 1944 judging from the crew compartment heater cowling on the rear engine deck.



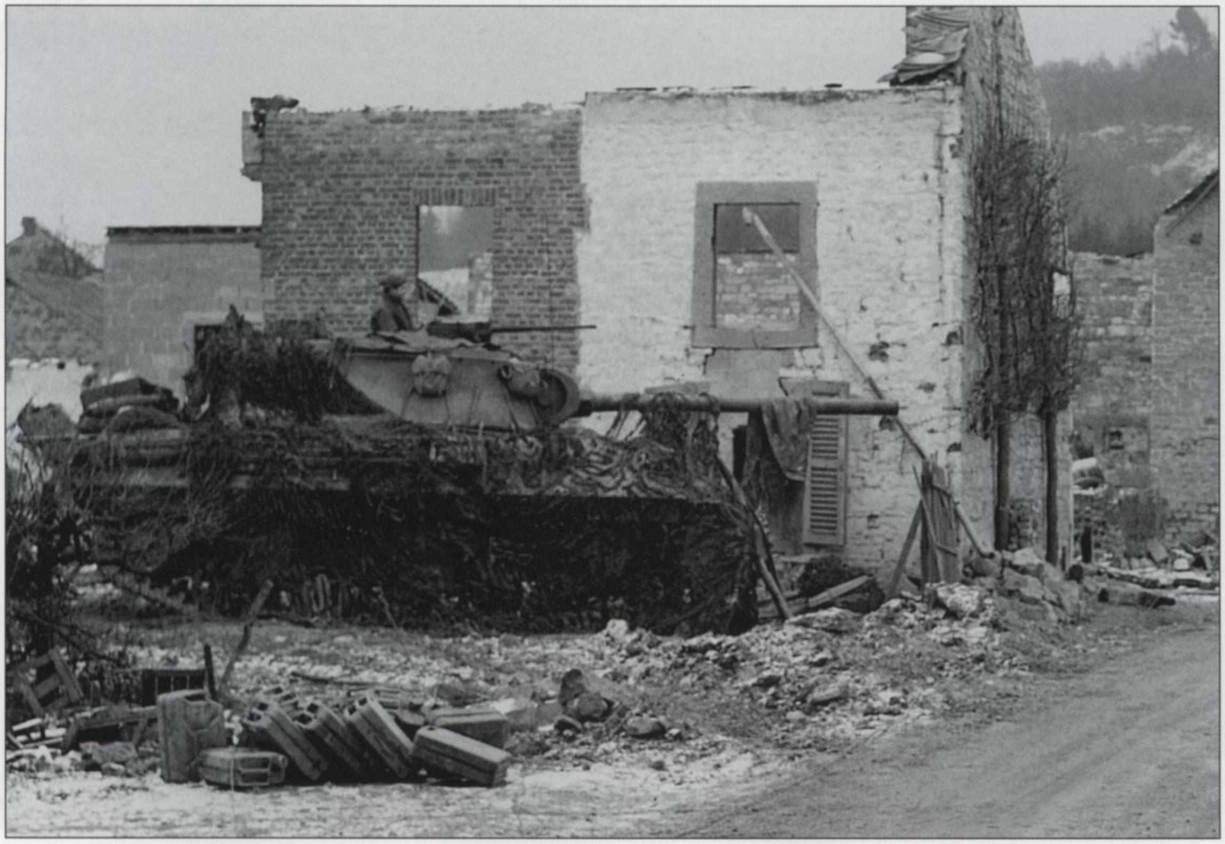
On 20 December, the 116.Panzer Division captured the fuel dump at Samree, but in subsequent fighting were pushed out by the 2nd Armored Division on 10 January. Here, some military police of the US 334th Infantry, 84th Division try to repair a SdKfz 250 half-track that had been left behind. The tactical insignia on the bow identifies it as belonging to the division's Pz.Jg.Abt. 146.



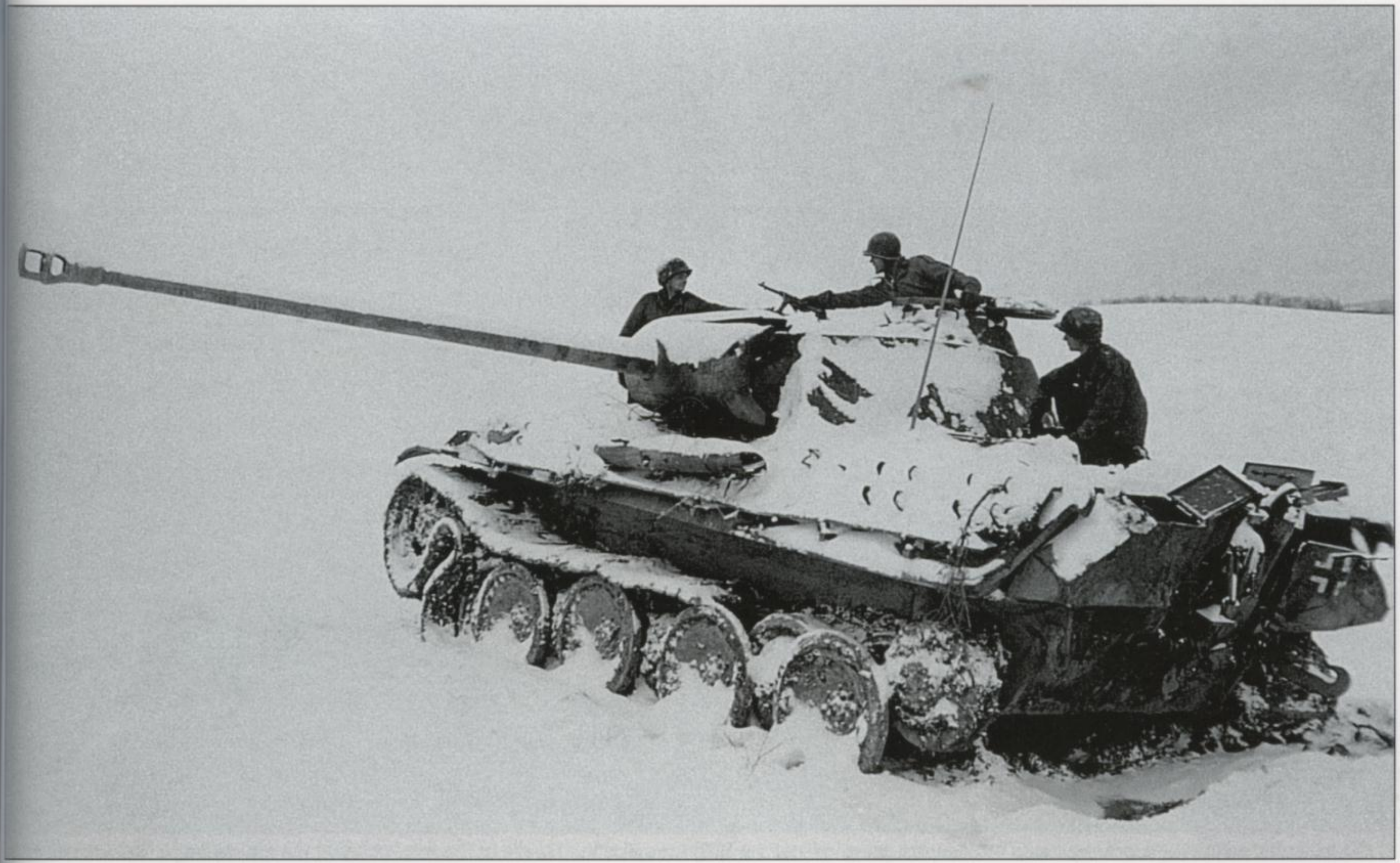
The furthest penetration by the 116.Panzer Division was Hotton, where hard fighting took place on Christmas and the following days with the 3rd Armored Division. This Panther from Kampfgruppe Bayer was one of a number left behind in the town after the fighting, with a PzKpfw IV evident in the background. This is a relatively late production Panther with the crew heater, and extended chin mantlet.



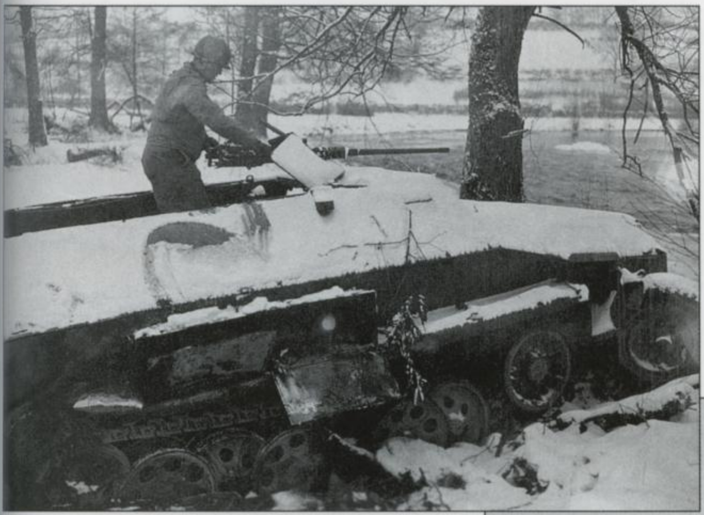
Another view of a Panther Ausf. G of 116.Panzer Division knocked out during the savage fighting for Hotton in late December 1944. Here, a local woman walks past the wreck on 1 January 1945.



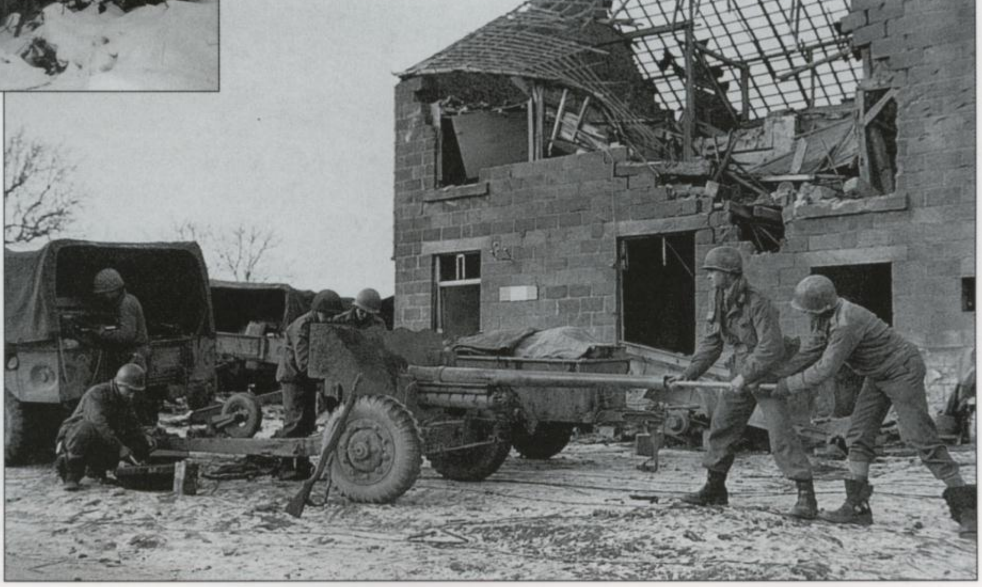
A M36 90mm gun motor carriage of the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion waits in ambush near the bridge over the Ourthe River in Hotton during the fighting there with the 116.Panzer Division on 30 December 1944.



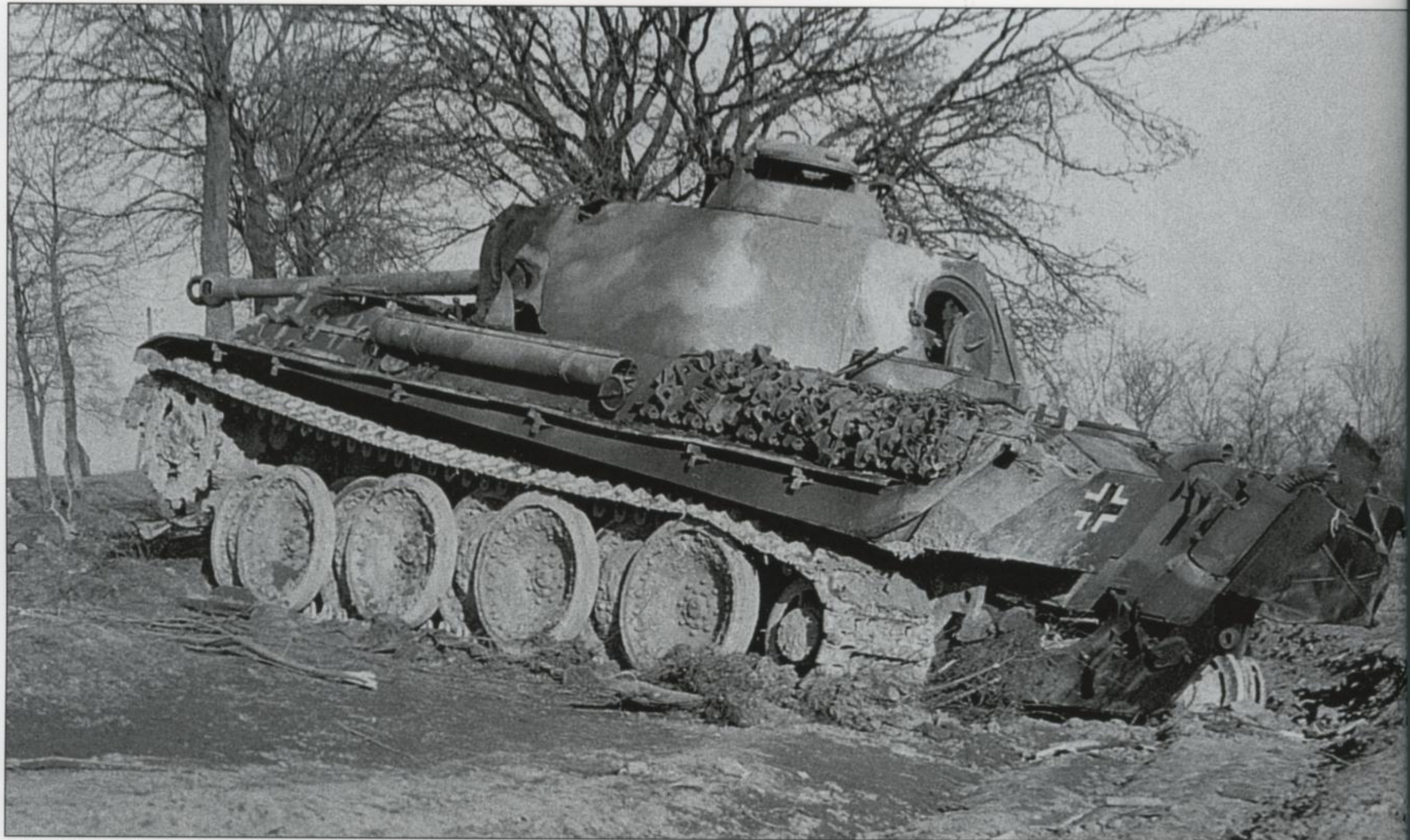
Troops from the US 84th Division inspect a knocked out Panther Ausf. G in the fields outside Marcouray on 9 January 1945. This was probably one of the tanks from 116.Panzer Division which took part in the fighting with the US 3rd Armored Division in this sector in late December and early January.



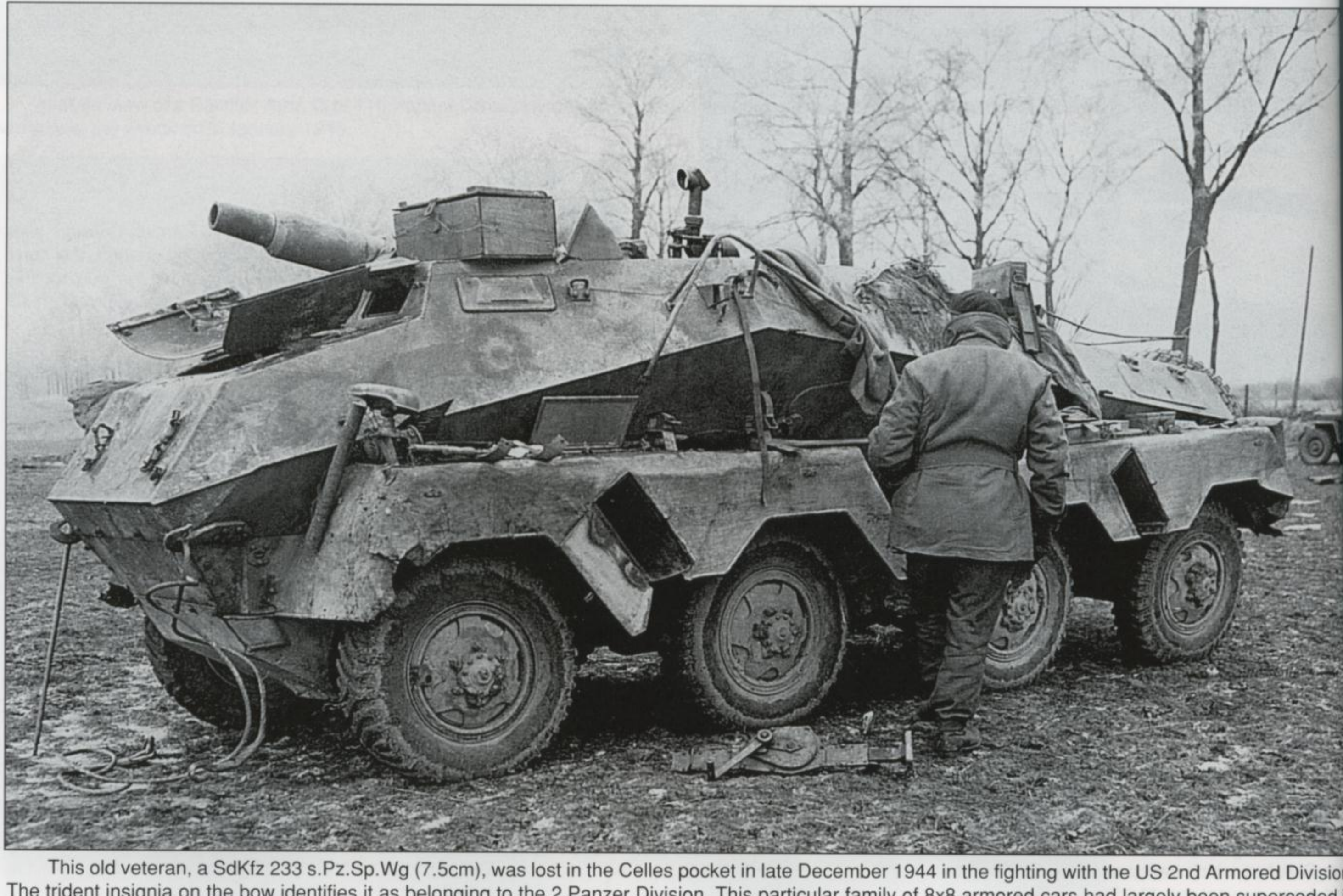
This SdKfz 251 half-track, probably from 116.Panzer Division was abandoned in Marcourt in early January 1945. Curiously enough, the crew had substituted a captured .50 cal Browning heavy machine gun for the usual MG42. It is being inspected by a GI from the 4th Cavalry Group on 13 January.



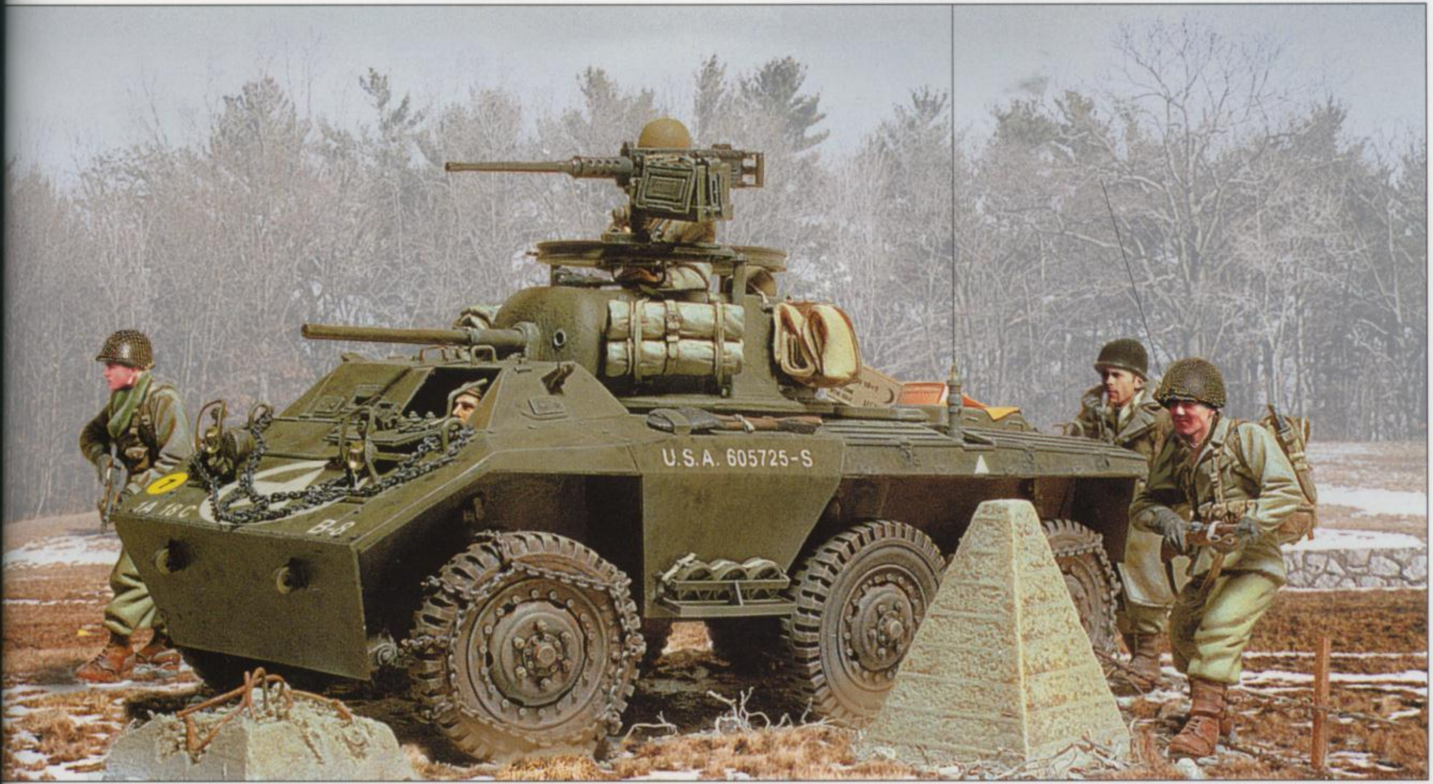
The crew of a 57mm anti-tank gun clean its barrel during a break in the fighting near Marche, Belgium on 2 January 1944. This gun belonged to an anti-tank company of the 334th Infantry, 84th Division, which took part in the fighting after Christmas against the 116.Panzer Division near Marche-Hotton.



Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army made the deepest advance into the Bulge towards the Meuse at Dinant. However, the narrow finger was attacked fro all sides, leading to a series of vicious tank battles for the Celles pocket. This Panther Ausf. G from the Panzer Lehr Division was knocked out during th attacks on Buissonville in the days after Christmas, and sports the division's characteristic wavy line camouflage.

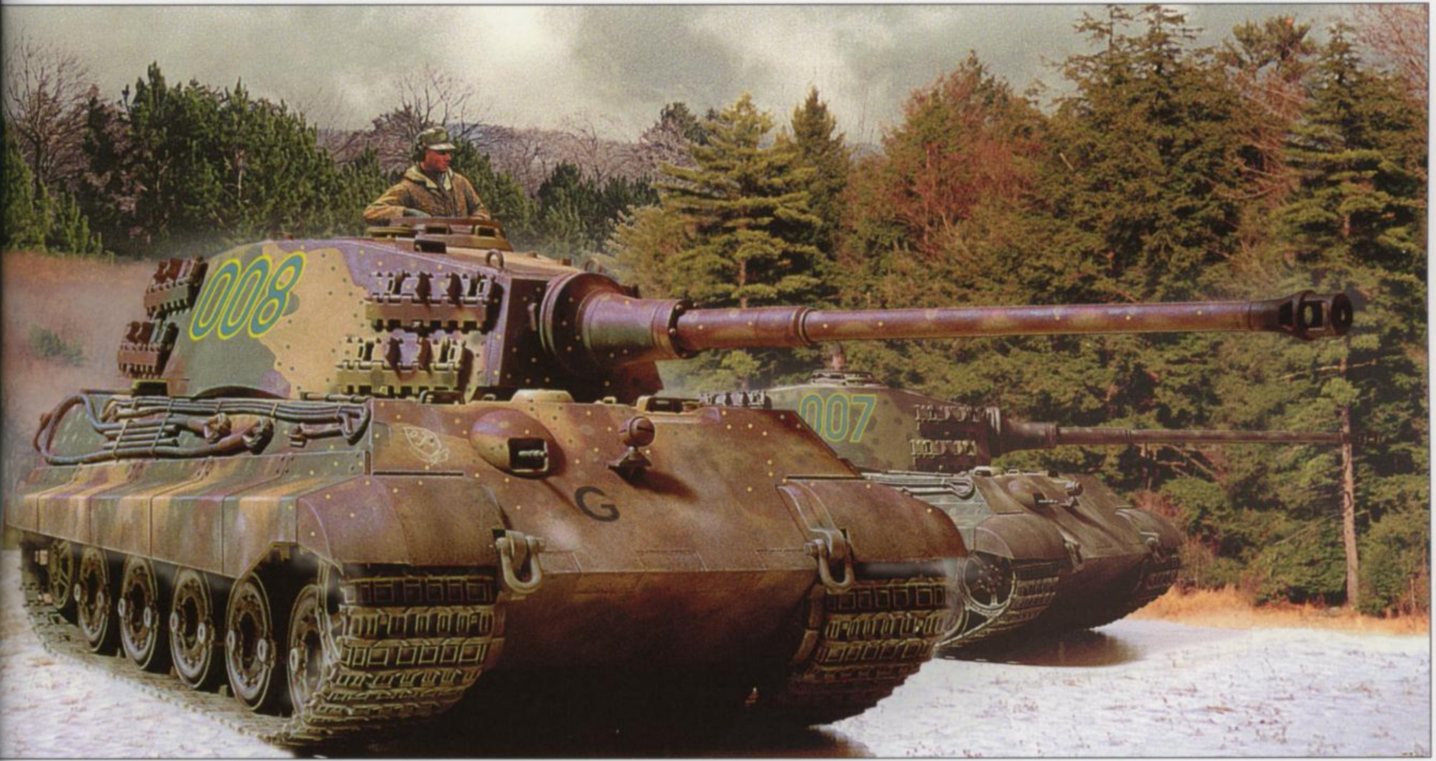


This old veteran, a SdKfz 233 s.Pz.Sp.Wg (7.5cm), was lost in the Celles pocket in late December 1944 in the fighting with the US 2nd Armored Divisio The trident insignia on the bow identifies it as belonging to the 2.Panzer Division. This particular family of 8x8 armored cars had largely been superceded i 1944 by the newer SdKfz 234 series, but some old veterans like this one continued to serve until lost in combat.



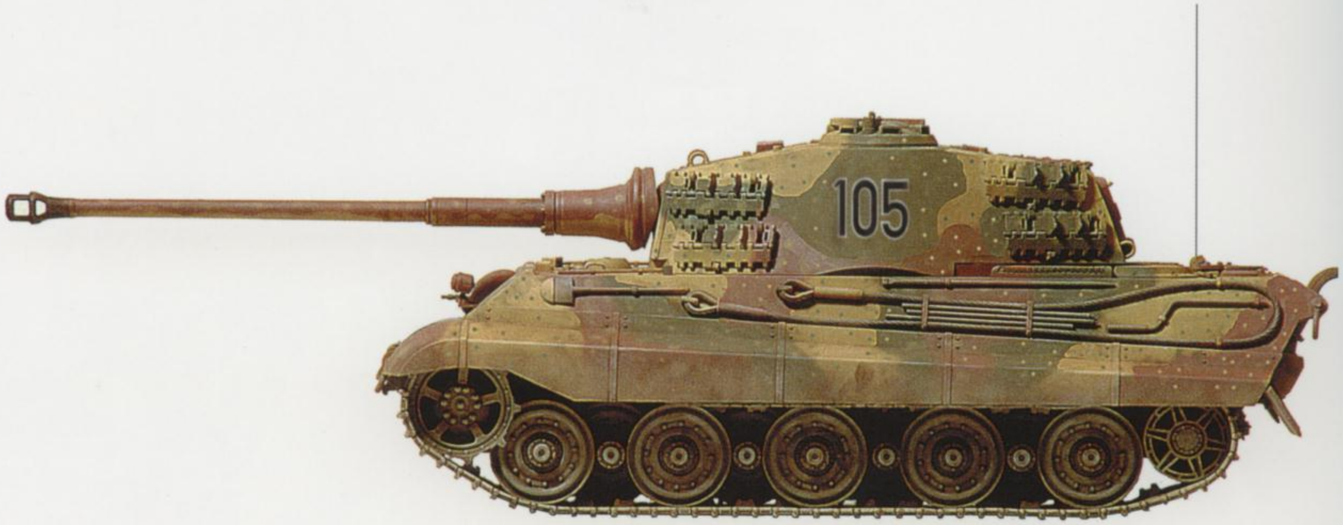
8 Armored Car, 18th Cavalry Squadron, 14th Cavalry Group, Losheim Gap

The 18th Cavalry Squadron used fairly typical US Army markings. The white star was painted on the forward turret side, here obscured by e crew's gear, and on the hull side, seen only partially due to the missing side skirt. A star in a circle was painted in a larger size on the hull nt. The bumper codes are 1A 18C for 1st Army, 18th Cavalry Recon. Sq., while the troop letter "B" is seen on the other side. There is also a ow bridging circle with the vehicle weight 7 in black. The vehicle registration number is painted on the hull side in white. Much of this unit s lost as part of Task Force Mayes in the one-sided skirmish with SS-Pz.Gren.Regt. 1 near Poteau-Recht on 18 December 1944.



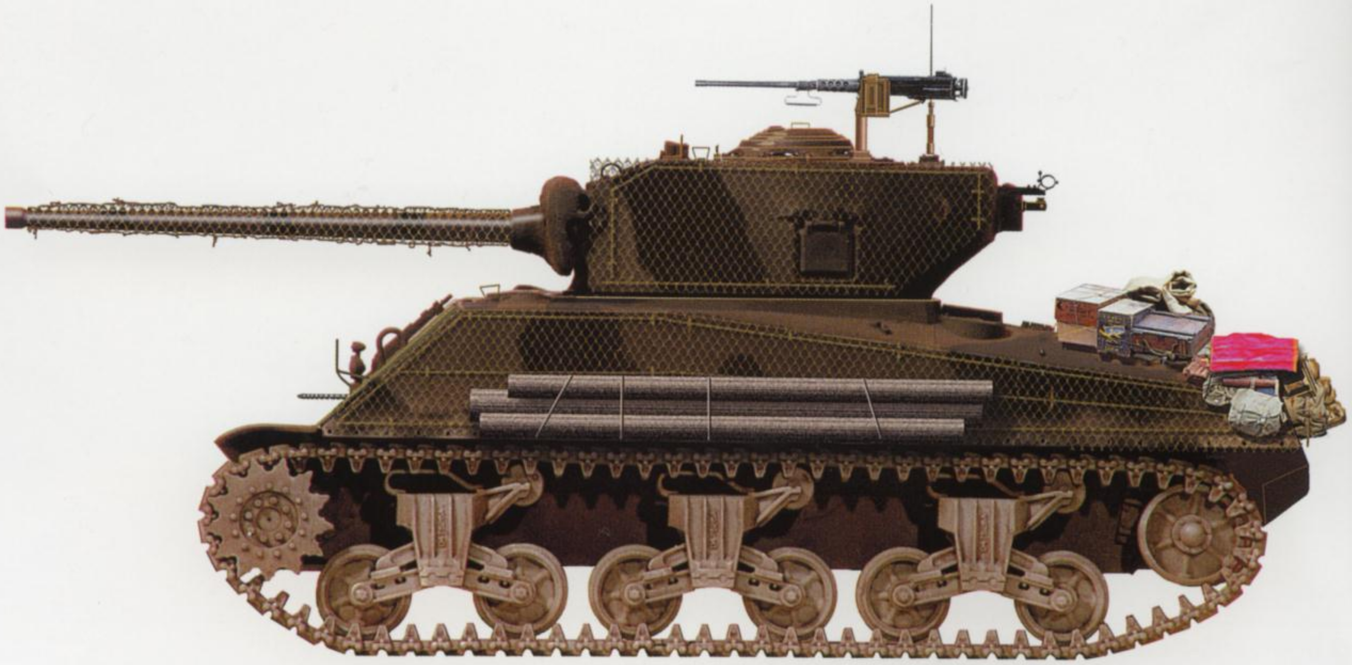
ng Tiger, s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501, Kampfgruppe Peiper

The headquarters section of the unit had three King Tigers, numbered 007, 008 and 009. There is some dispute as to the colors of the mbers, some sources stating red with white outline and others blue with yellow. Some tanks of the unit carried the divisional insignia on the nt hull front as seen here. The lead assault units were given letter codes to assist military police in directing traffic. Kampfgruppe Peiper was igned "Rollbahn D", though trailing elements like this King Tiger unit were given the letter "G" as seen applied in black paint on the hull front. conserve paint, in October 1944 the German plants left the tanks in the basic RAL 8012 red oxide primer, with sprayed-on patches of dark low RAL 7028 and dark green RAL 6003. The King Tigers used the "Hinterhalt" (ambush) scheme with small patches of contrasting color plied to create a dappling effect. On the King Tigers, this was a very sparse pattern of the small dots. This particular tank was abandoned ar Born after its transmission failed.



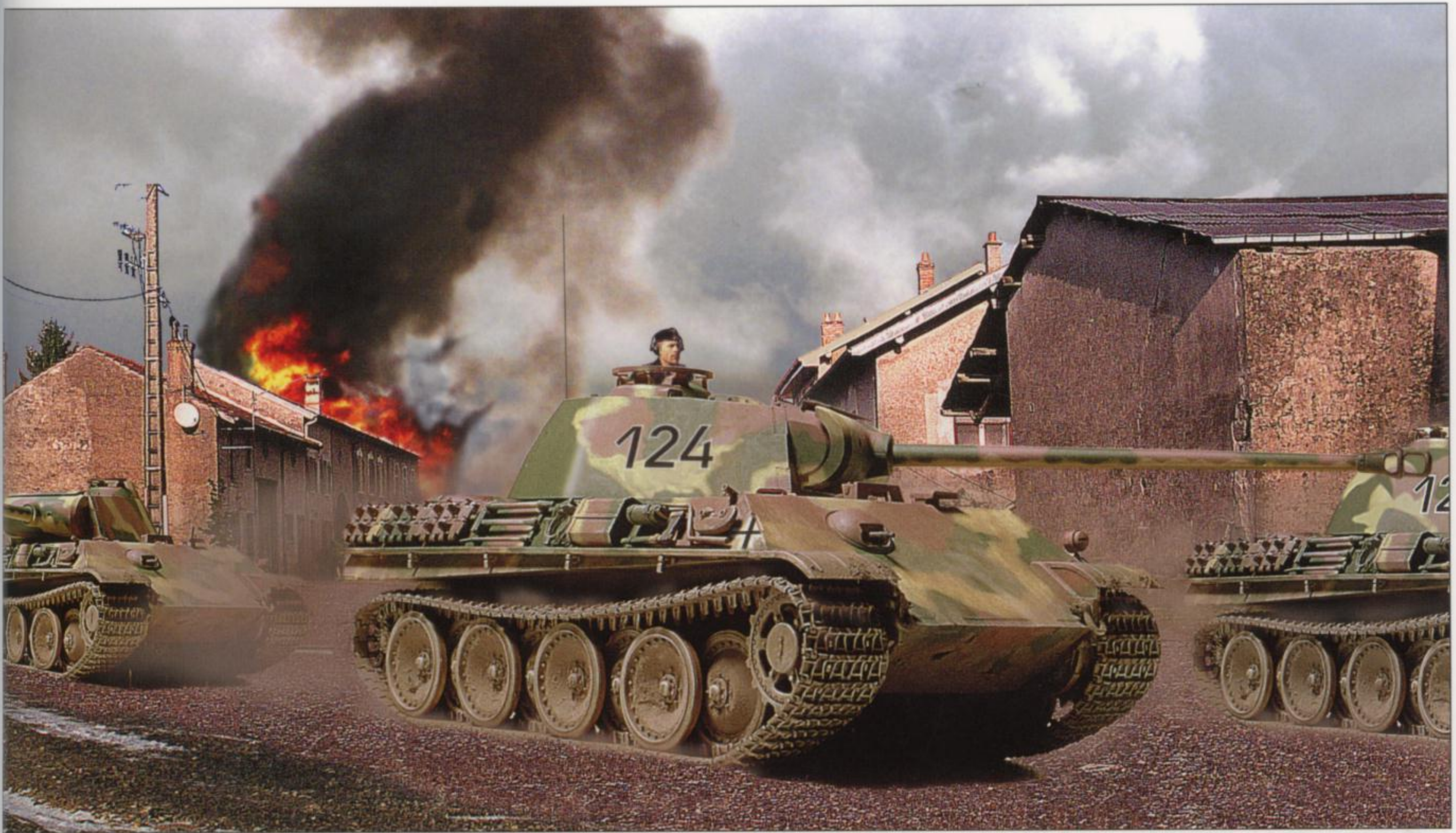
King Tiger, 1/s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501, Kampfgruppe Peiper, Stavelot, Belgium

The s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501 received 11 older King Tigers from s.Pz.Abt. 509 which used the factory-applied camouflage scheme adopted in September 1944. However, most of the tanks were new production vehicles, finished in the October pattern using the base RAL 8012 red oxide primer with dark yellow and dark olive green in hard-edged patches with Hinterhalt contrasting dappling. The individual companies used different colors for their tactical numbers: black with white outline for the 1st company, red with white outline for the 2nd company, and blue with yellow outline for the 3rd company. This tank, commanded by SS-Obersturmführer Jurgen Wessel, was abandoned after it got stuck in debris on Rue St. Emilon in Stavelot on 18 December.



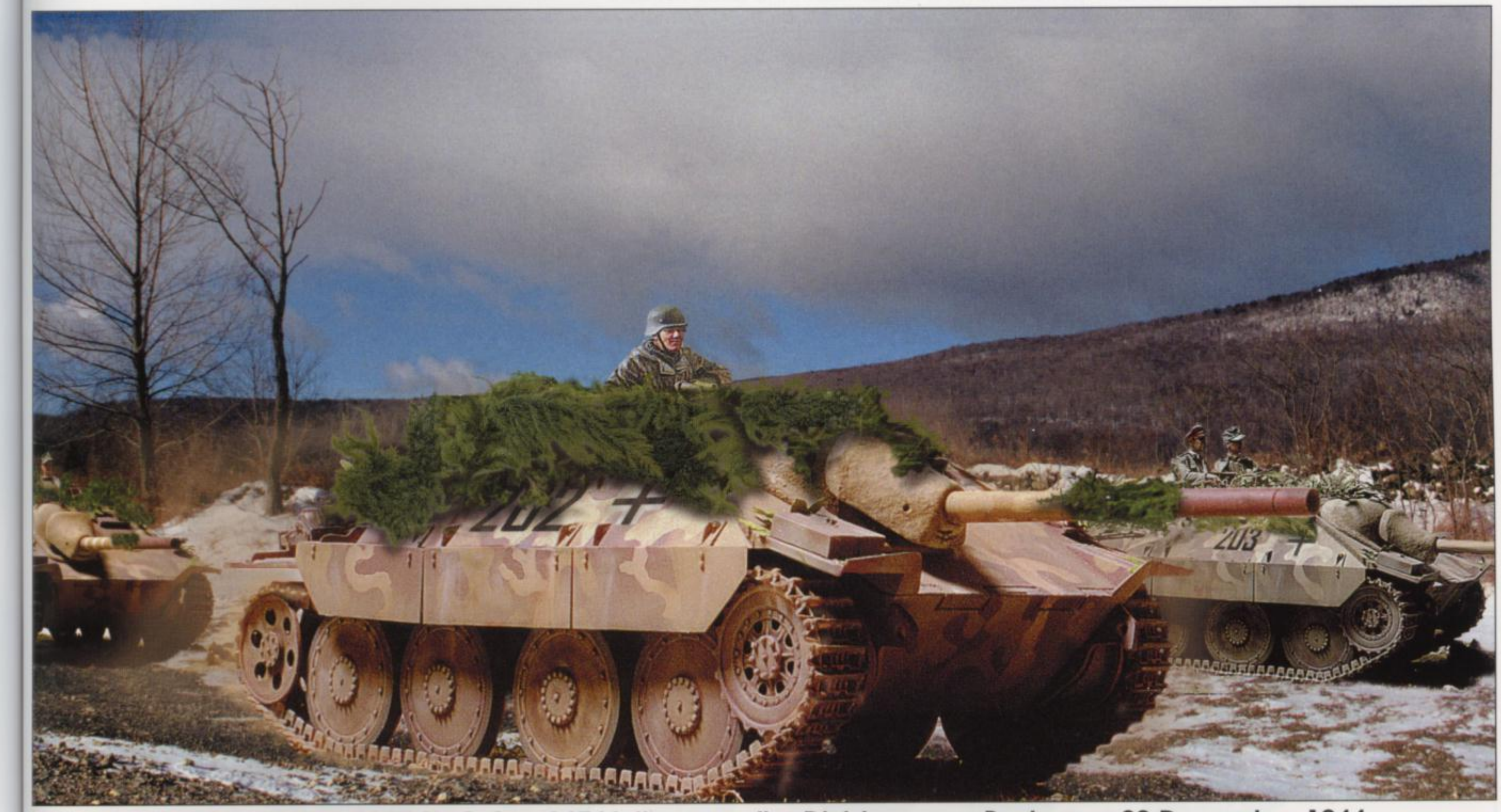
M4A3 (76mm) Medium Tank, Task Force Harper, 9th Armored Division

The tanks of the 9th Armored Division were systematically camouflaged by the 602nd Camouflage Engineer Battalion shortly after their arrival in France in November 1944. This included the addition of the usual First US Army camouflage pattern of black over olive drab, as well as a set of Sommerfield matting, a type of screening. The screen was intended to make it easier for the crew to attach tree branches for camouflage. During the fighting in early December, the muddy terrain encouraged tank units to carry unditching beams on the side of the tank as seen here.



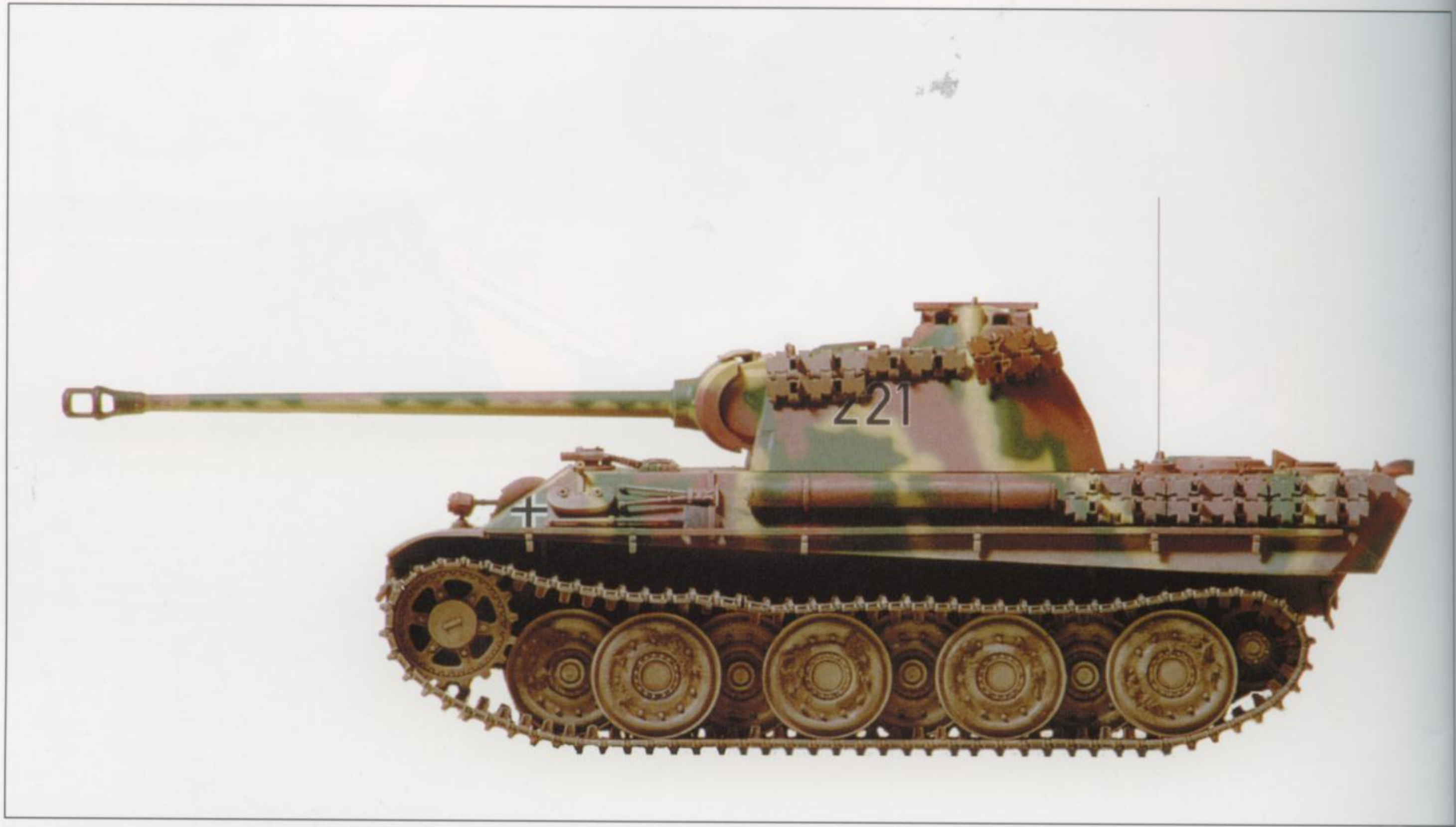
Panther Ausf. G, 1/SS-Pz.Regt. 12, 12.SS-Panzer Division, Krinkelt-Rocherath, Belgium

Most of the Panthers serving in the Ardennes were new production vehicles from the early autumn. The base color was RAL 8012 red oxide primer, with small sprayed patches of dark yellow and dark green. The Hinterhalt scheme does not appear to have been widely used at this time on Panthers. The 12.SS-Panzer Division used a distinctive style of tactical numbers, with elongated "1".



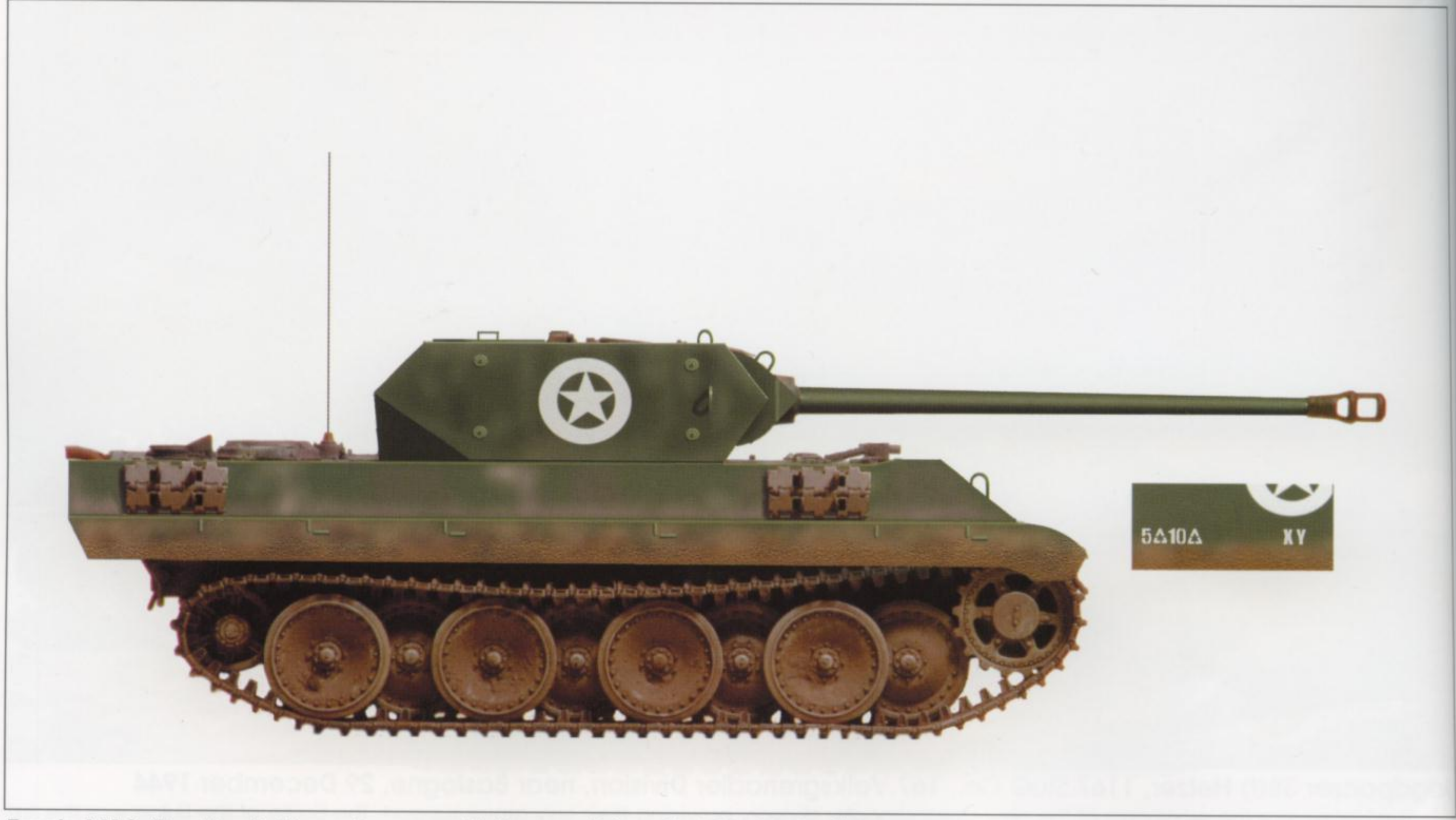
Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer, 1167.StuG Co., 167.Volksgrenadier Division, near Bastogne, 29 December 1944

The Hetzer was the workhorse of the new Volksgrenadier division, providing their only armor support. The Battle of the Bulge was the first time that the Hetzer was used on the western front in any significant numbers, totaling about 170 vehicles by the end of the campaign. These vehicles are typical of December production batches at BMM. The scheme was the usual factory applied RAL 8012 red oxide primer with hard-edged patches of RAL 7028 dark yellow. However, instead of the usual dark green, bands of RAL 9002 white were applied. This scheme was sometimes seen on late production Panthers as well. The white was sometimes not very opaque, giving it a slightly ivory cast. The tactical markings are a simple set of numbers in black and the usual national insignia. Evergreen foliage was heavily used to provide camouflage cover against air attack.



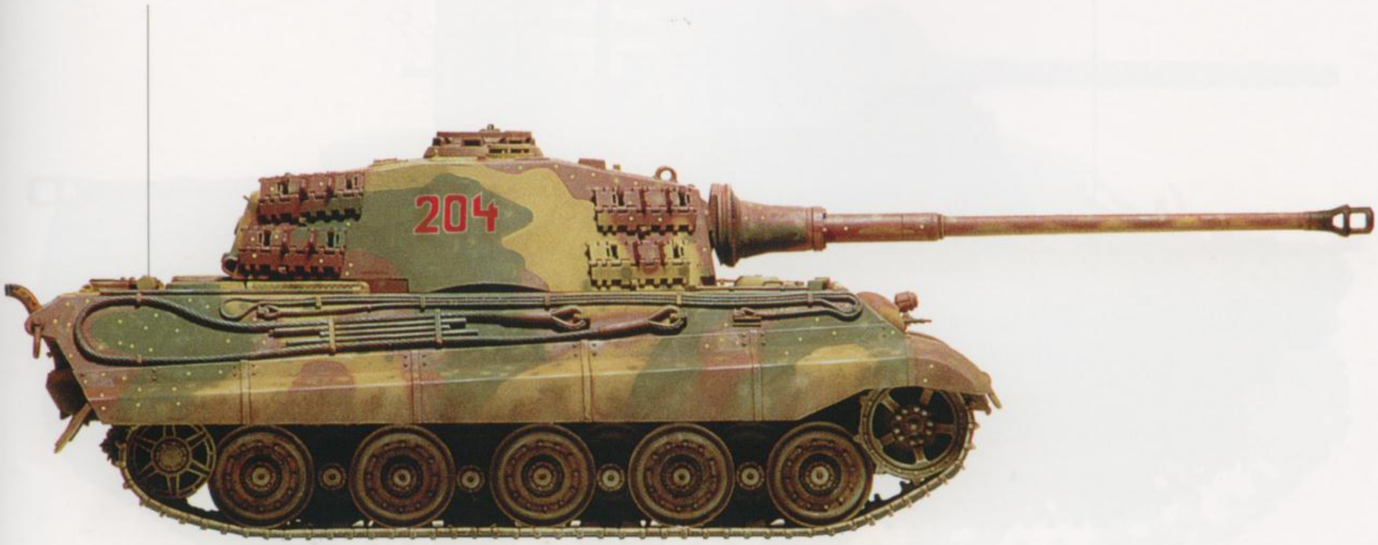
Panther Ausf. G, Kampfgruppe Peiper, 1.SS-Panzer Division, La Gleize, Belgium

This was one of the relatively rare Panther Ausf. G tank fitted with steel wheels instead of the usual rubber-rimmed type. It served with the 2nd company of I/SS-Pz.Rgt. 1, 1.SS-Panzer Division and was part of Kampfgruppe Peiper. It was abandoned in the town of La Gleize. The camouflage scheme is typical of Panthers manufactured in September-October 1944 with a base coat of red oxide primer with a pattern of dark yellow and dark green. The tank tactical number is painted in the usual fashion.



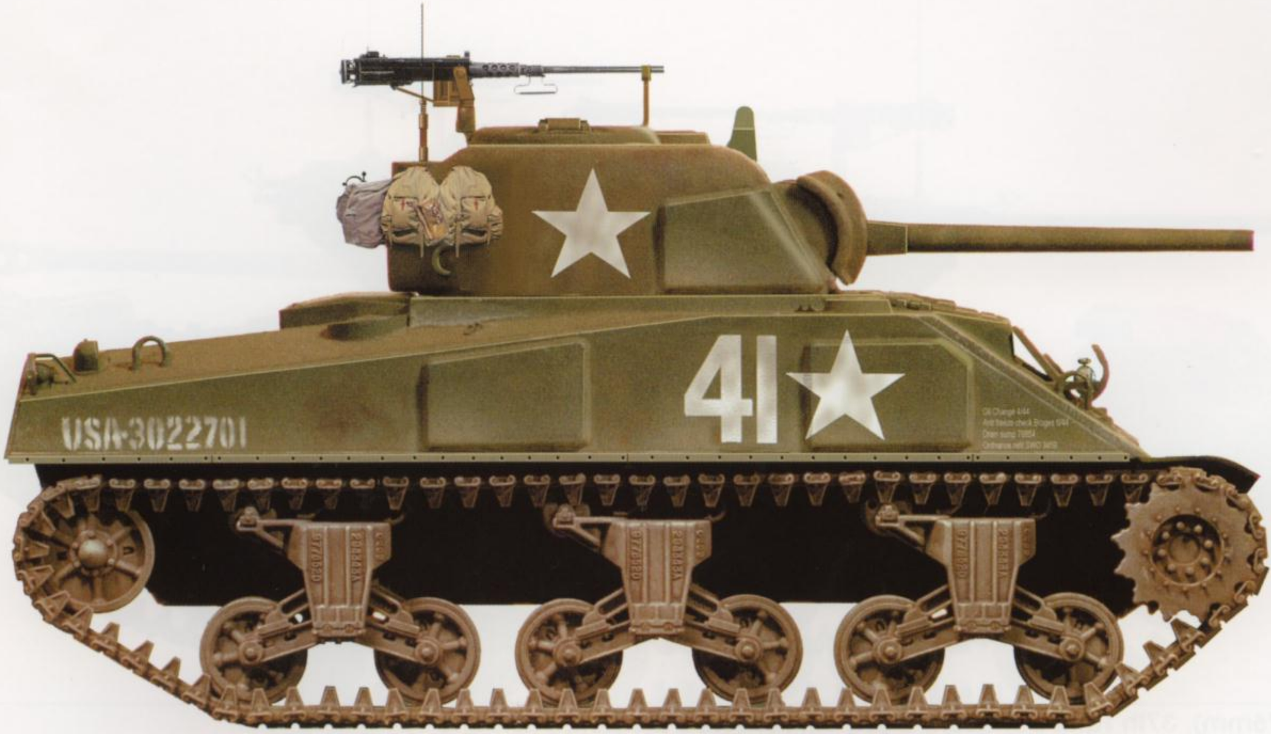
Ersatz M10 (Panther), Kampfgruppe X, Panzer Brigade 150, Malmédy

The Panther tanks of Pz.Brig. 150 were painted to resemble American tanks. In all likelihood, they were painted in German RAL 6003 dark olive green. They carried prominent white circled allied stars on either side of the turret, and on the center of the glacis plate. The US-style bumper codes on the bow showed the markings of B Company, 10th Tank Battalion, 5th Armored Division. In the center was a German code, XY which was used to identify vehicles of the unit to German traffic police. Most of these tanks were knocked out in the fighting in Malmédy on 21 December with the US 120th Infantry Regiment.



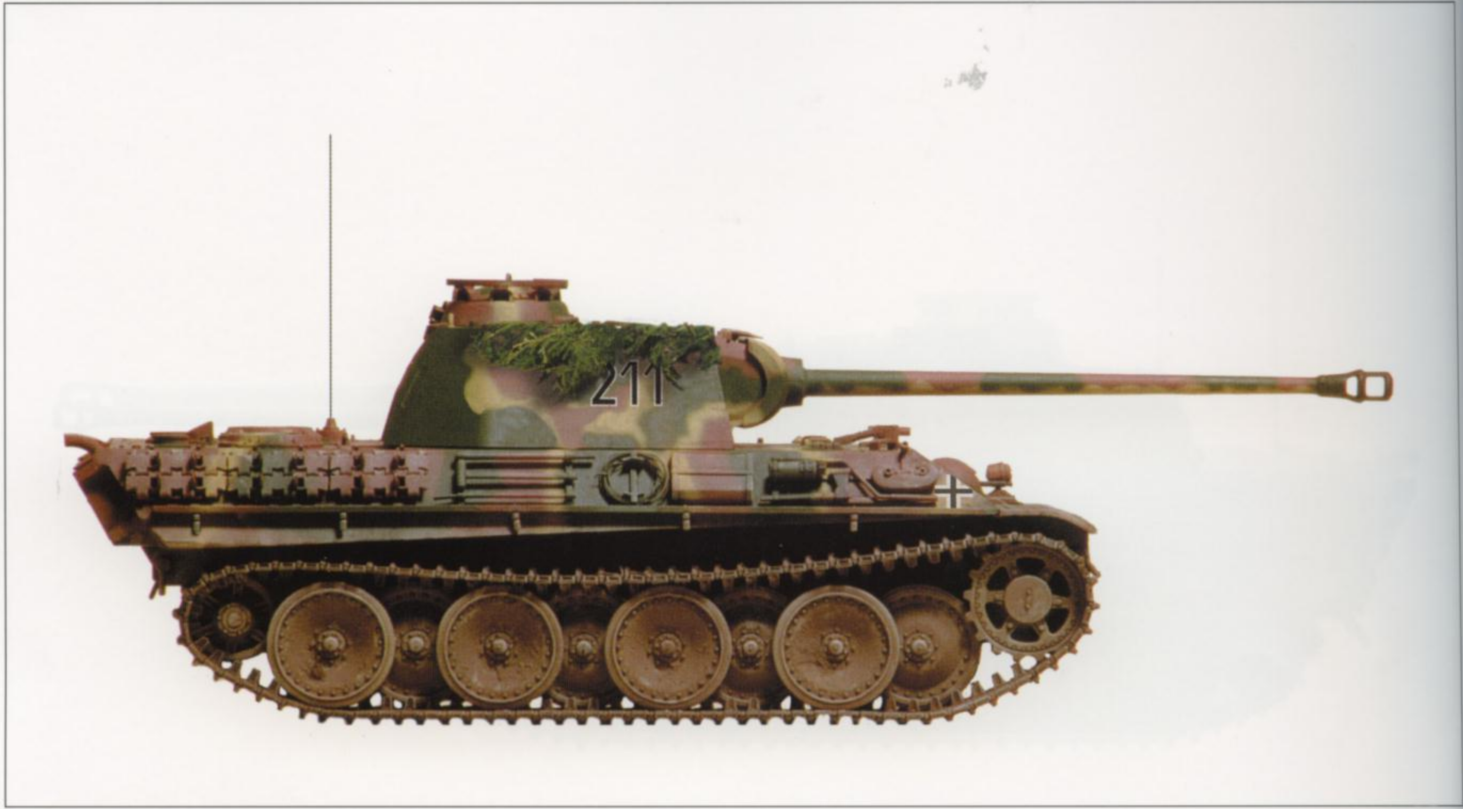
King Tiger, 2/s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501, Kampfgruppe Peiper, La Gleize

This King Tiger of the 2nd company was painted in the typical scheme for this unit, the basic red oxide primer with hard-edged patches of dark yellow and dark olive green with a slight pattern of Hinterhalt dapple dots. The company tactical numbers on the turret are red with a white trim. This particular tank was abandoned near La Gleize in late December.



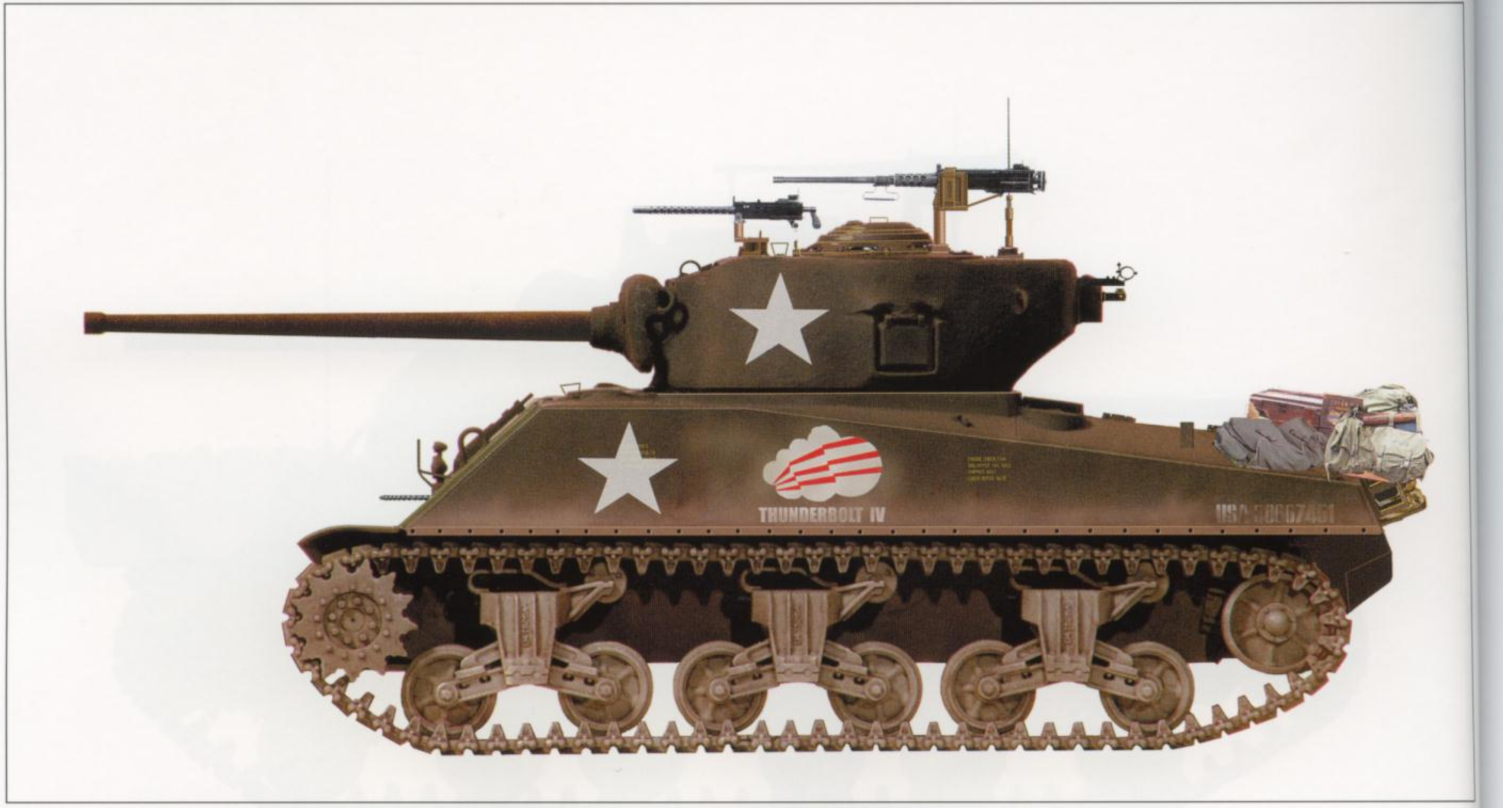
M4 Medium Tank, Team O'Hara, CCB, 10th Armored Division, Wardin, December 1944

This M4 is finished in fairly typical markings for the 10th Armored Division with prominent tactical numbers on the hull side in white. This was the only major tank unit in Bastogne during the siege. This particular tank took part in the support of the Bastogne perimeter with Task Force O'Hara commanded by Lt. Col. James O'Hara. It was knocked out in the fighting with Panzer Lehr Division near Wardin.



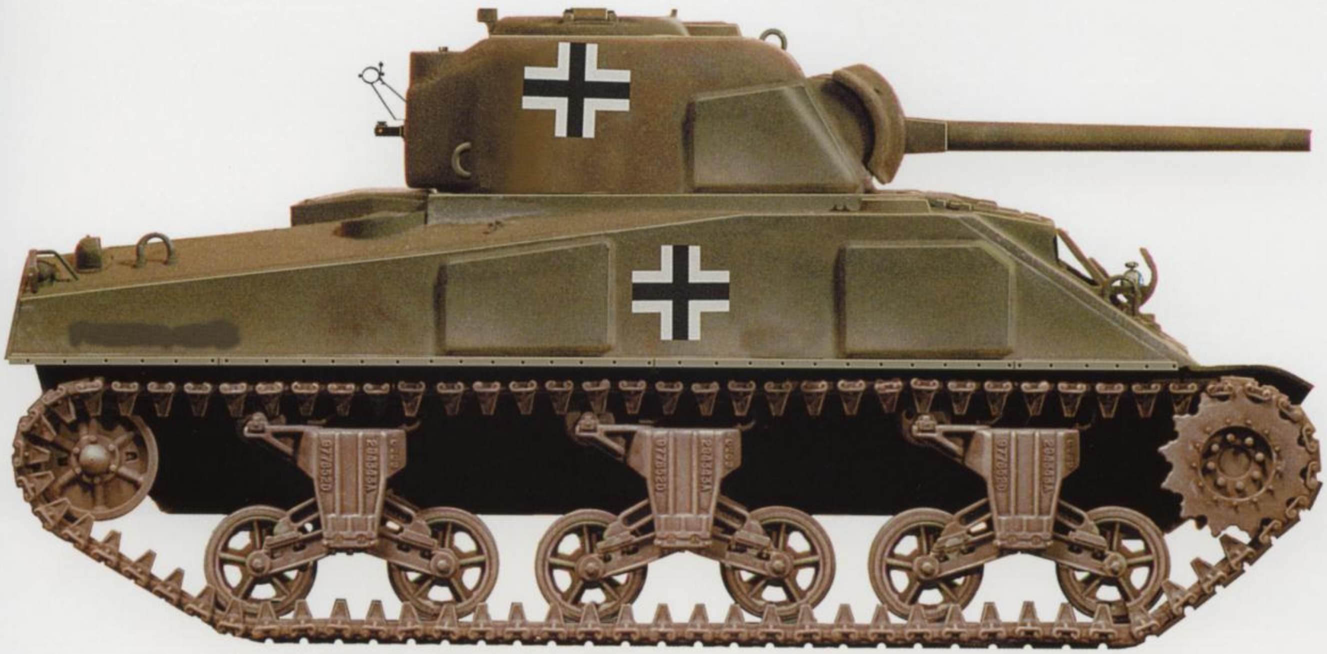
Panther Ausf. G, Kampfgruppe Peiper, 1.SS-Panzer Division, Stoumont, Belgium

This particular Panther Ausf. G of SS-Pz.Regt. 1 is interesting in that it was in the spearhead of Kampfgruppe Peiper that reached closest to their objective before finally being knocked out in an engagement with the 740th Tank Battalion near Stoumont. It displays standard markings for this unit. The paint scheme is the typical pattern for the Ardennes fighting, red oxide primer with patterns of dark yellow and dark olive green. The tactical markings are in the same style as the steel-wheel Panther also shown here.



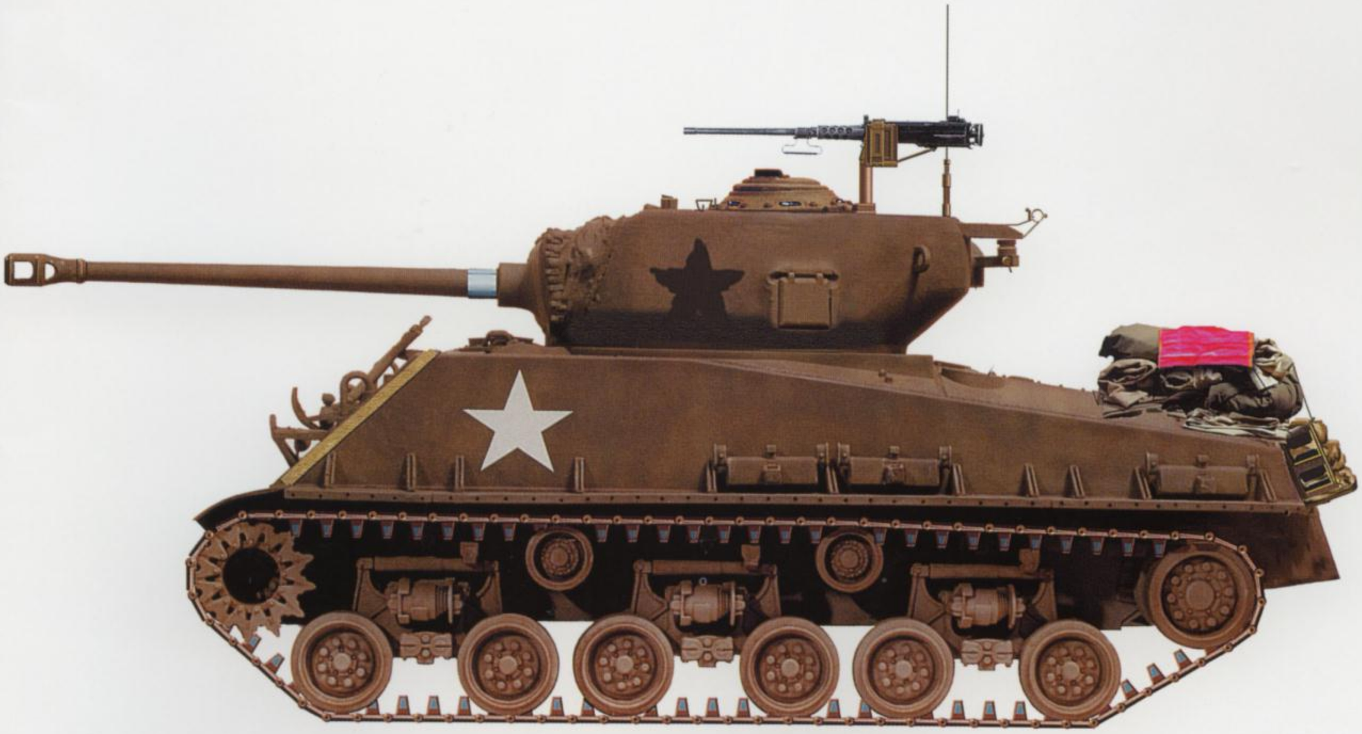
M4A3 (76mm), 37th Tank Battalion, CCA, 4th Armored Division, Bastogne

The commander of the 37th Tank Battalion that led the relief of Bastogne was Creighton Abrams, one of the top US tank aces of World War II. Today's M1 main battle tank is named in his honor. His tanks were traditionally nicknamed "Thunderbolt", and carried a cartoon rendition of red thunderbolts on a white cloud. This was his fourth Sherman, the earlier ones having worn out, and it was first put into service in November 1944. The 76mm tanks were not popular in the 37th Tank Battalion, and Abrams was asked by the divisional command to take one as his personal tank in the hopes of stirring interest in the type in his unit. Unlike the division's two other battalions, the 37th Tank Battalion often left the prominent white star on their vehicles rather than painting them out.



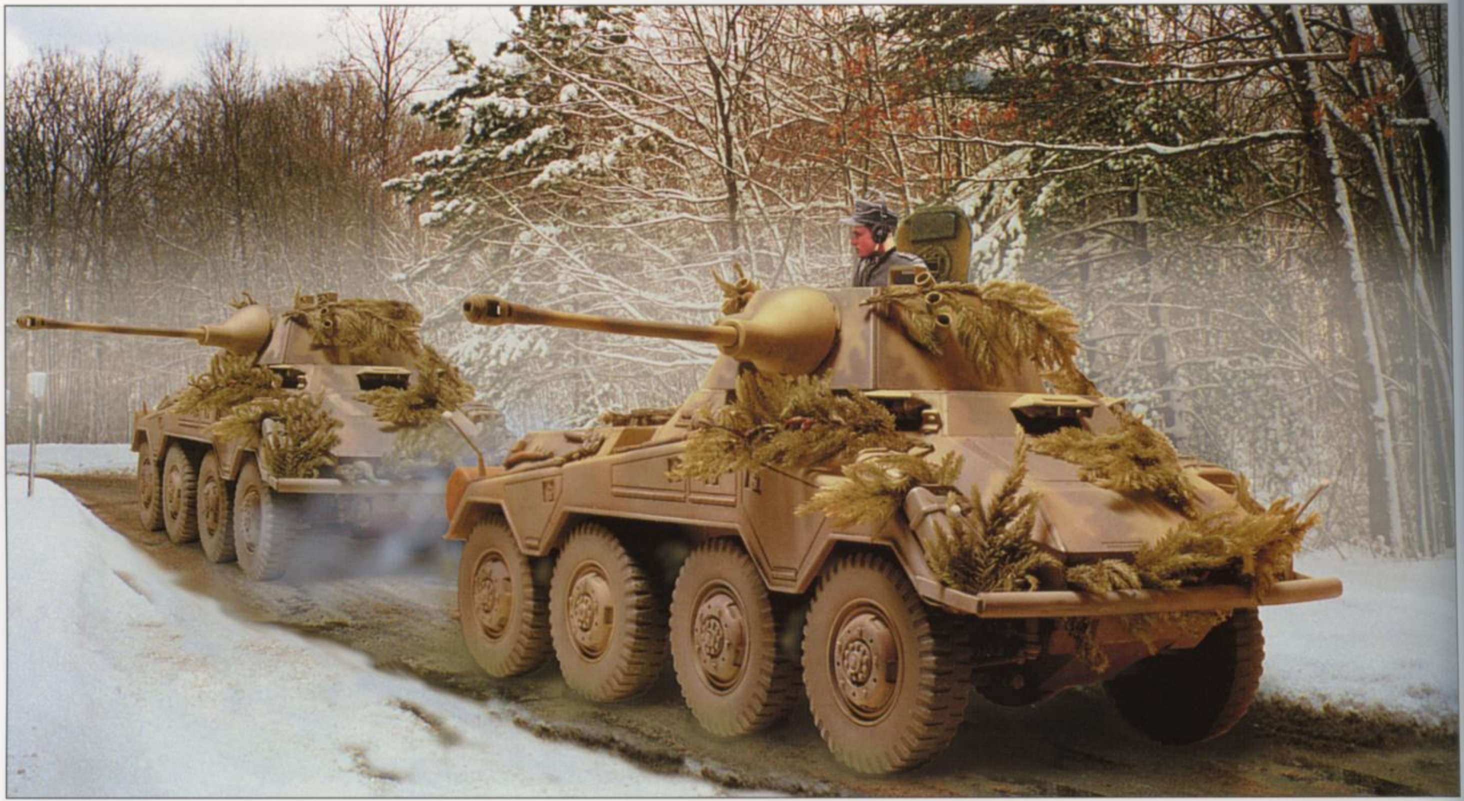
M4 Medium Tank, Fallschirmjäger Regt. 15, 5.Fallschirmjäger Division, Esch-sur-Sure

The German Seventh Army was particularly weak in tanks, and so tended to use any that they captured. The German paratroopers captured six M4 medium tanks during the fighting near Wiltz on 19 December, and after remarking them with German crosses, put them back in action. The crosses were painted larger than normal to prevent friendly fire incidents, and the US registration number was also painted out. The cross on the turret is a bit askew. This tank was lost during the fighting in mid-January 1945.



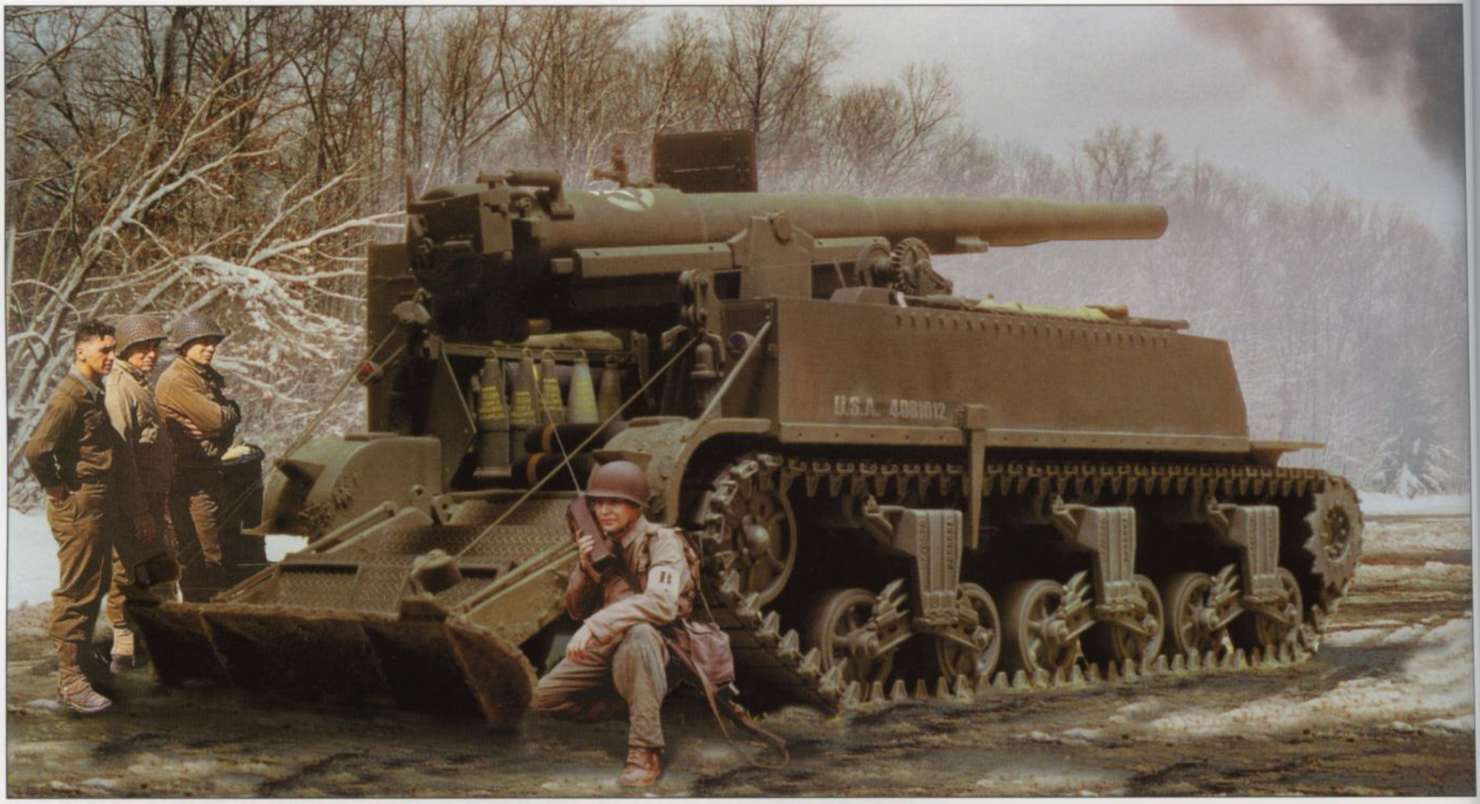
M4A3E8, 35th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division, Bastogne, January 1945

A small number of the new M4A3E8 tanks arrived in December as replacements and were quickly put into service. The mastic sealant used during shipping is still evident around the base of the turret. The 35th Tank Battalion usually painted out the star markings since they presented too visible a target to German anti-tank gunners. However, the white star is still untouched on the hull side. The tank is carrying the usual fluorescent cerise air identification panel.



SdKfz 234 Puma, Kampfgruppe von Bohn, Foy-Notre-Dame, 26 December 1944

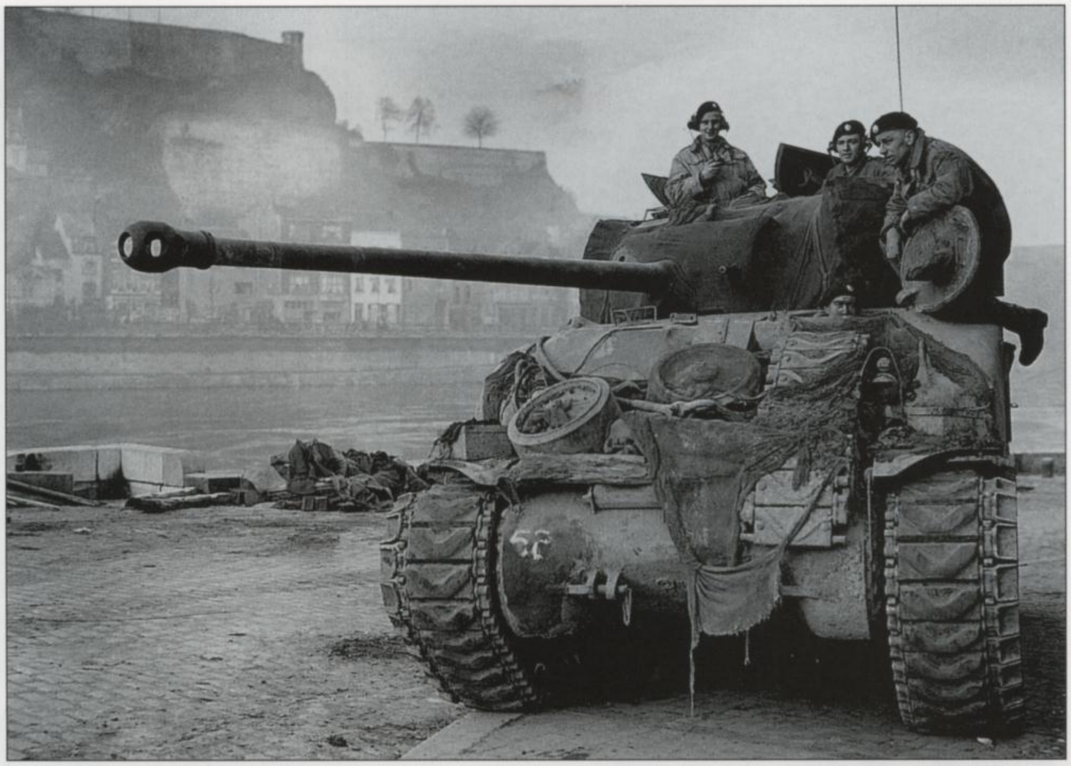
Kampfgruppe von Bohn was the reconnaissance element for the German push to the Meuse near Dinant in late December and this unit penetrated deeper than any other before finally being stopped in a short fire-fight with the British 3 RTR only a few miles short of the Meuse river. Their Puma armored cars were finished in the standard summer 1944 scheme of dark yellow with a diffuse pattern of dark brown and dark olive green applied at the whim of the crew. From existing photos of the unit, few markings were carried. Some Pumas had a simple black and white Balkan cross on the middle of the turret, but others had no tactical numbers of cross. The armored cars were heavily covered in pine boughs to provide camouflage against Allied fighter bombers.

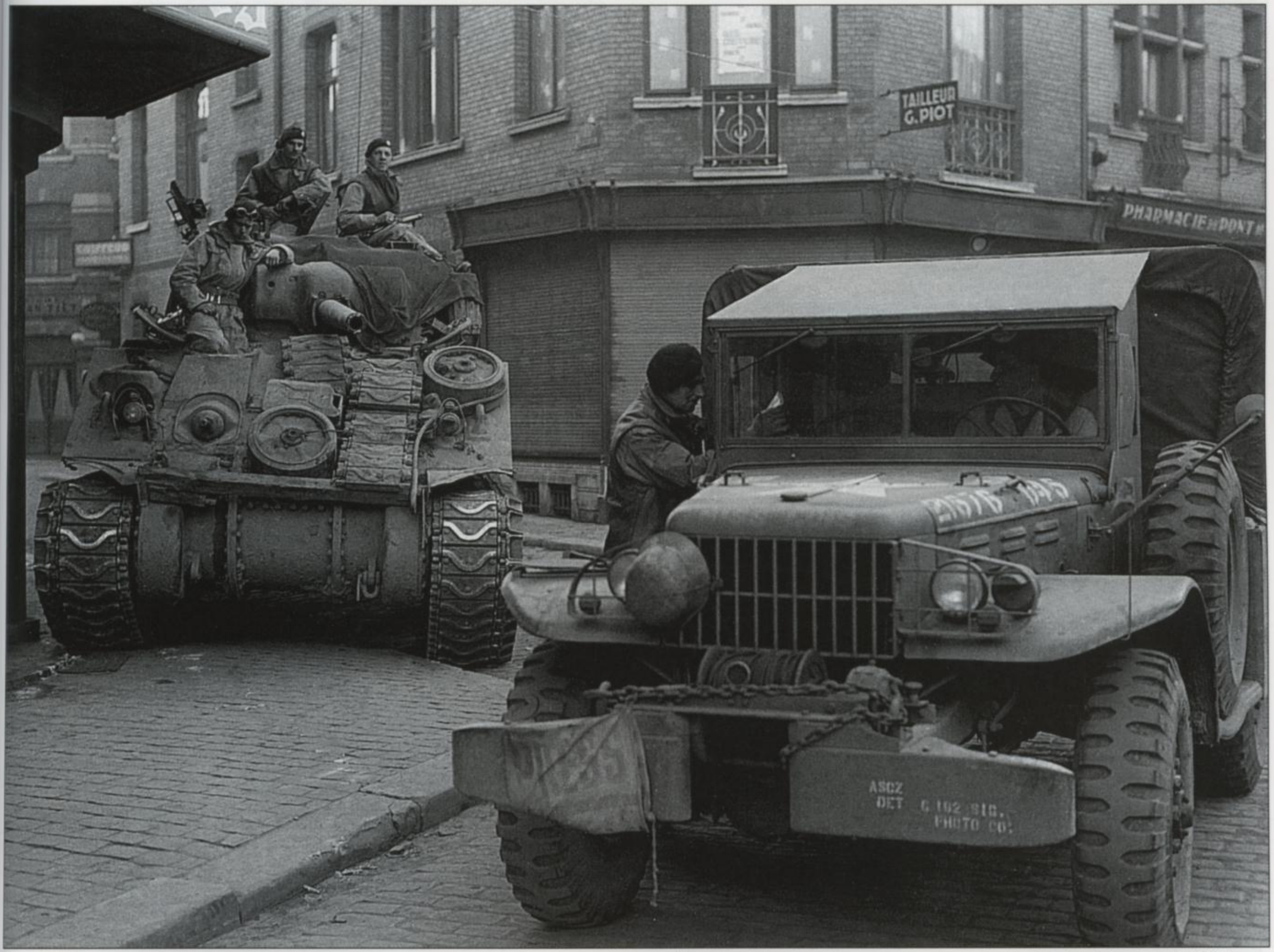


M12 155mm GMC, Battery B, 991st Field Artillery Battalion, La Gleize, Marche-Belgium, December 1944

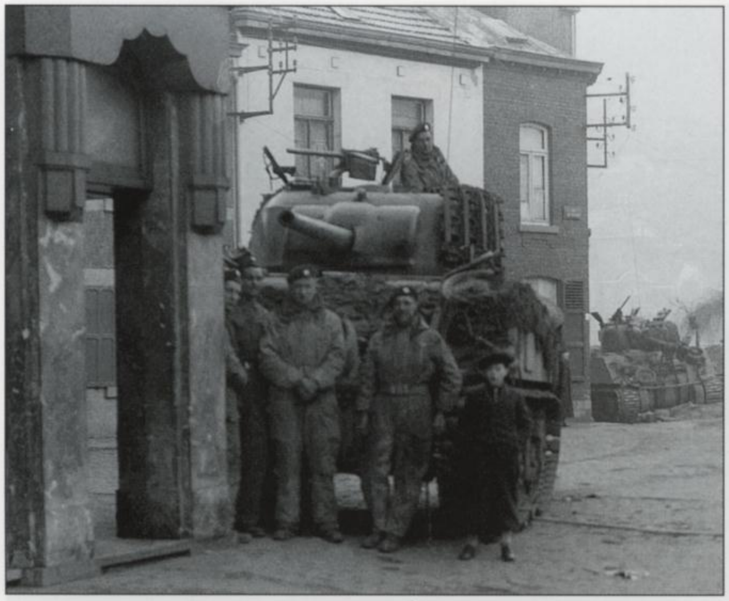
The sound of doom for Kampfgruppe Peiper was a M12 155mm GMC seconded to the 740th Tank Battalion. It fired nearly two hundred rounds at point blank range into La Gleize, demoralizing the stalled panzer troops, and finally convincing Peiper to order a retreat. The unit's self-propelled guns were in the usual olive drab finish. During the fighting in France, the unit painted its regimental crest on the hull side, since it was a descendent of the Washington Grays. However, this practice was stopped in the autumn, and the insignia painted over. As a result, unit markings were very simple, only the registration number, and a white Allied recognition star on the top of the gun barrel.

The threat posed by the lead elements of Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army led Montgomery to deploy the British 29th Armoured Brigade along the Meuse river. This Sherman Firefly with its long 17 pdr. gun was positioned near the Meuse river bridges in Namur on Christmas Day, 1944.

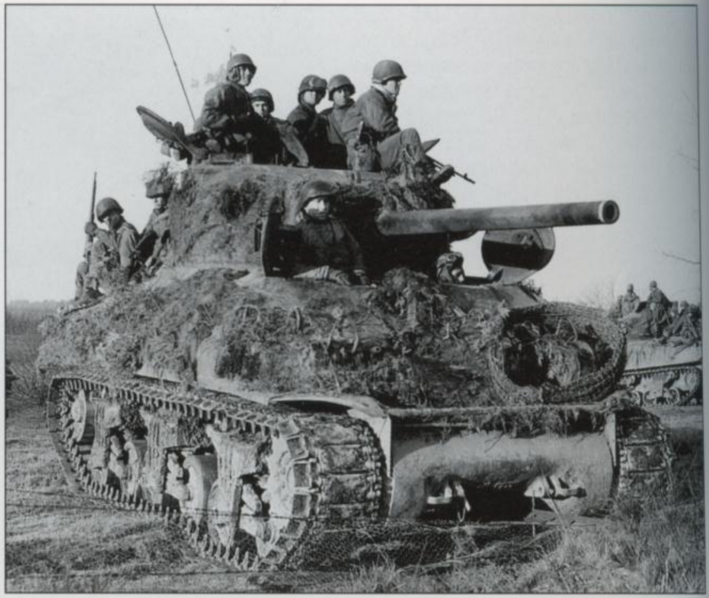




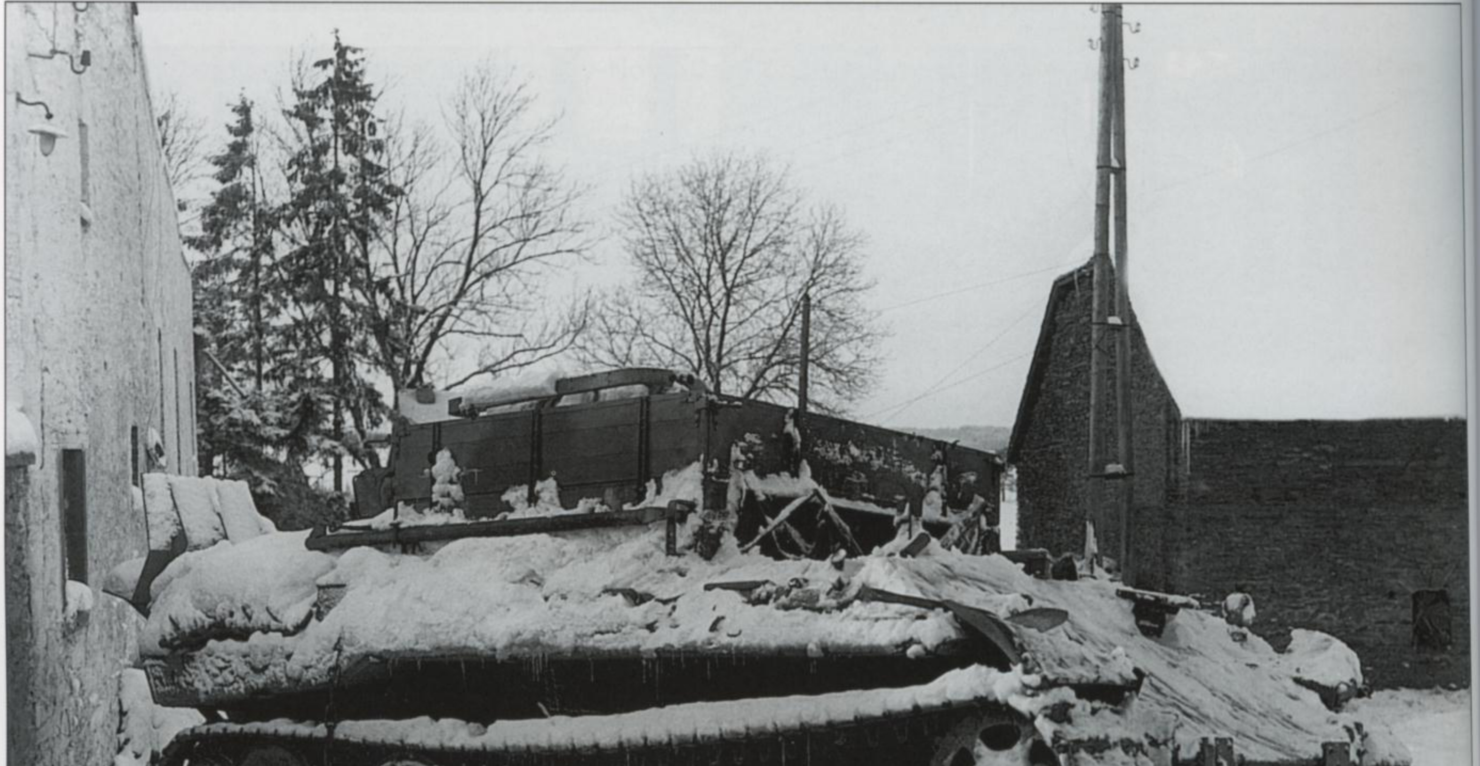
Another Sherman tank of the British on Christmas, talking with the crew of a $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck assigned to press correspondents. The brigade's 3 RTR was sent over the Meuse near Dinant before Christmas, and stopped the lead elements of the 2.Panzer Division only five and a half miles from the Meuse in a short engagement on 24 December 1944.



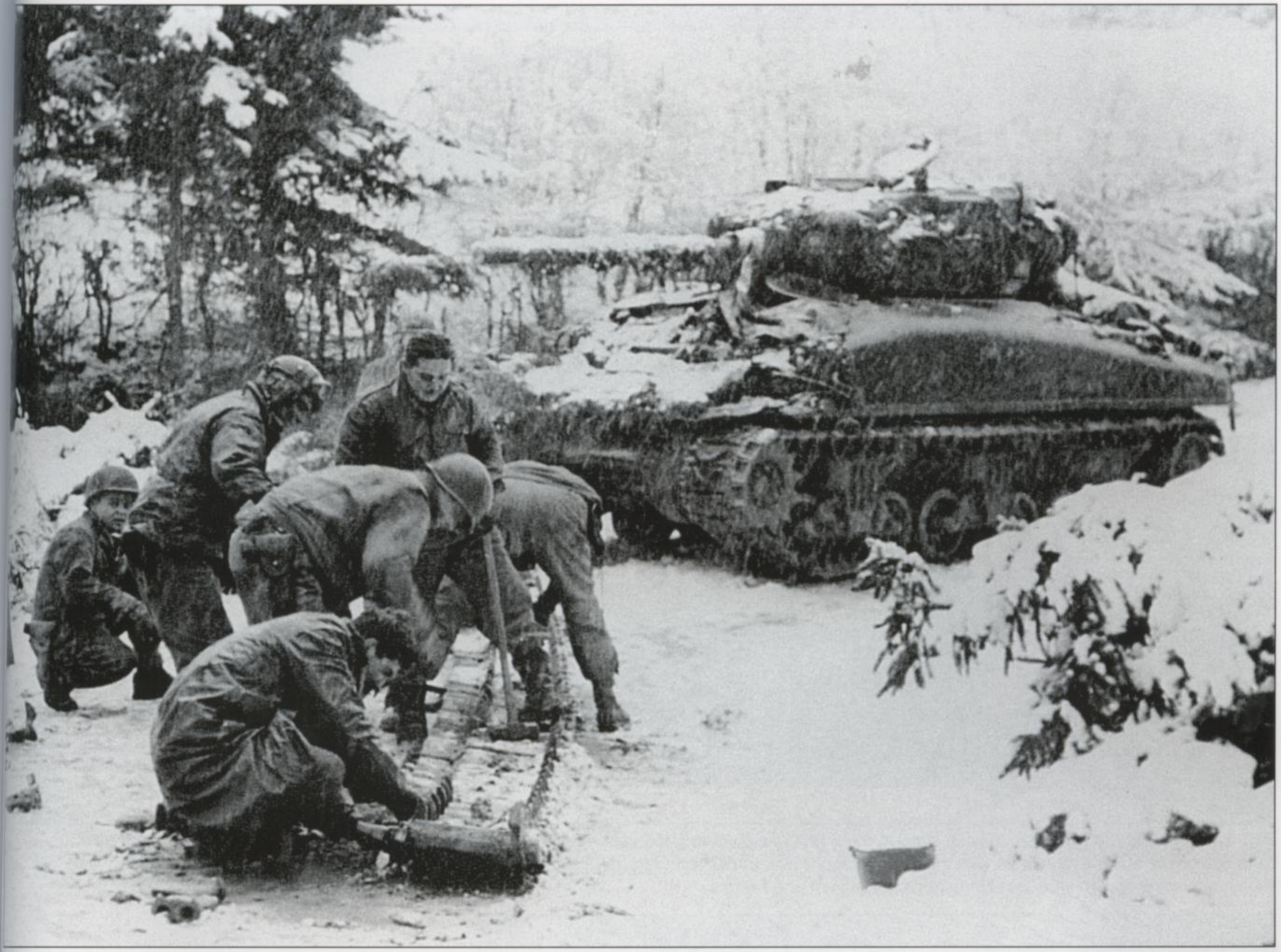
A view of some more British Shermans of the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, 29th Armoured Brigade at Namur, this time with spare Churchill track on its turret for added protection. There is another Firefly in the background.



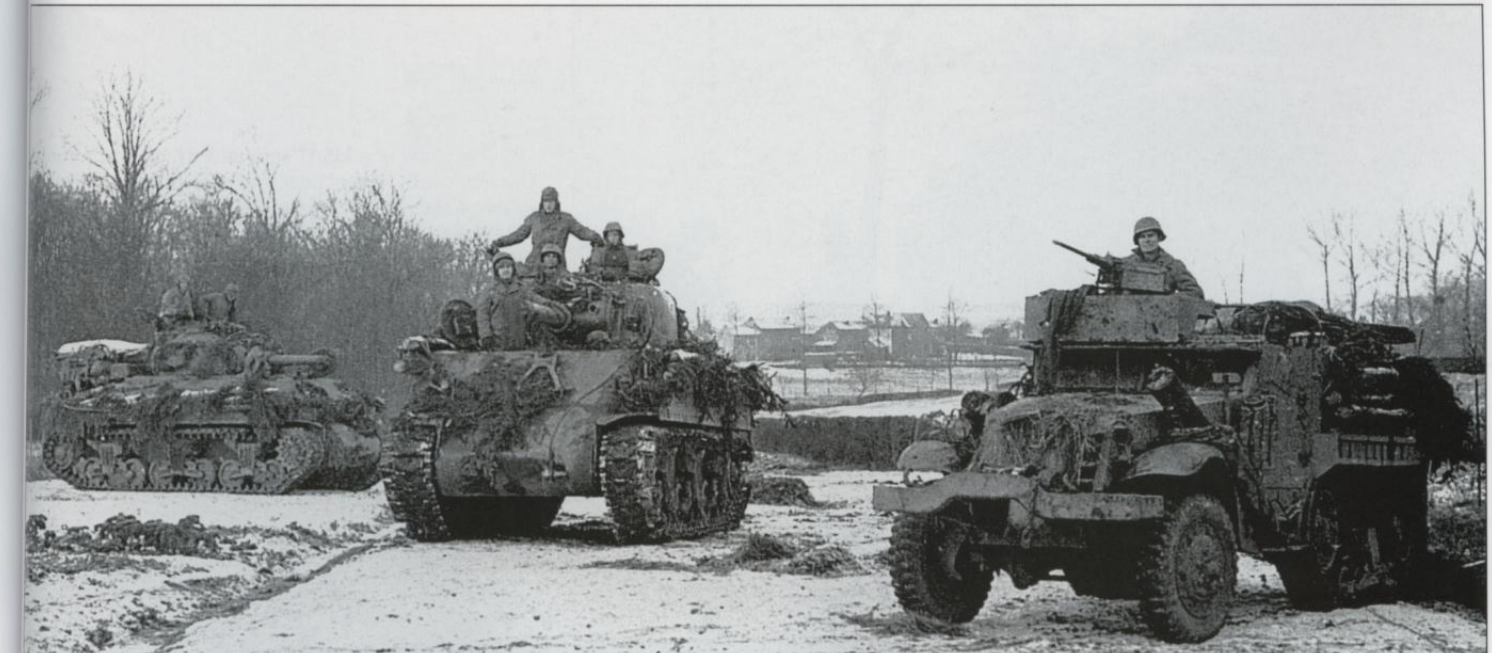
While the British 29th Armoured Brigade blocked the road to the Meuse, the 2nd Armored Division attacked the exposed flank of 2.Panzer Division with full force. Here a group of M4A1 (76mm) carry infantry into an assault near Frandeux on 27 December. The 2nd Armored Division's attacks around Celles shattered Manteuffel's spearhead near the Meuse.



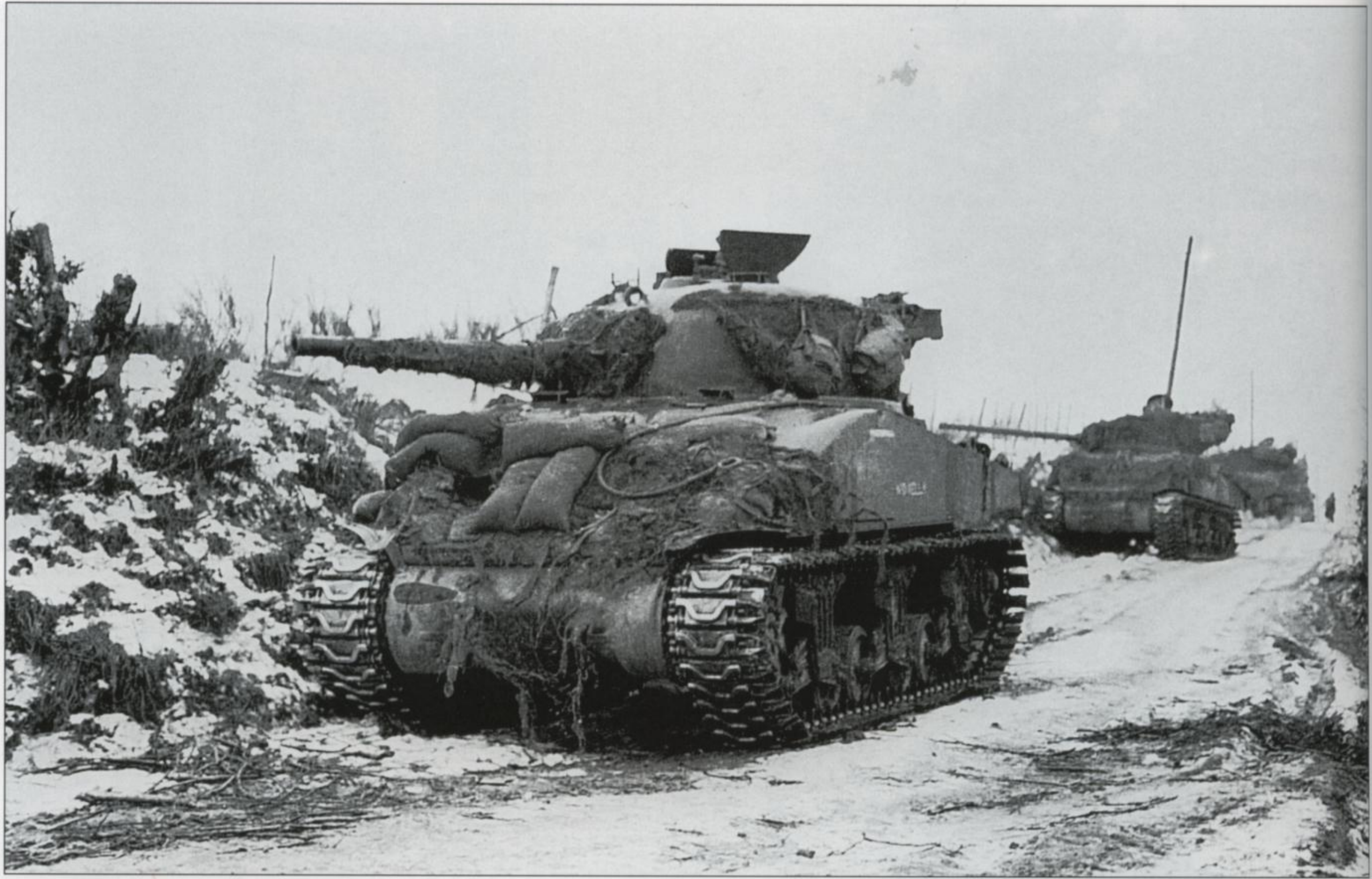
The Panzer Lehr Division left this Bergepanther recovery vehicle in the town of Morhet south west of Bastogne during the fighting there in mid-December 1944. This shows the vehicle nearly a month later after the January snowfalls and prior to it being packed up and shipped back to the Untied States for evaluation.



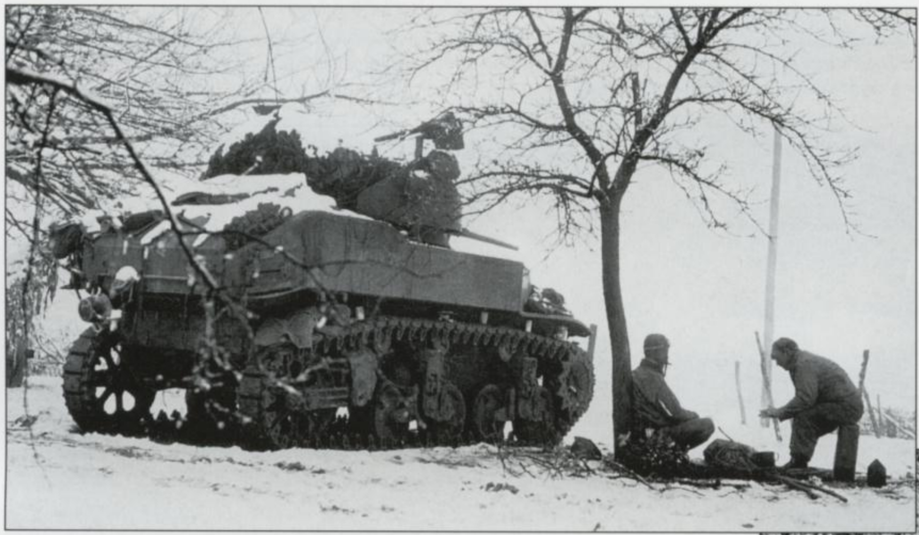
After the 2nd Armored Division blunted the German advance near Celles, it took part in the counter-offensive to reduce the Bulge. Here the crew of a M4A1 (76mm) medium tank repair the track in a wooded area near Amonines, Belgium in early January 1945 in the midst of a snow storm.



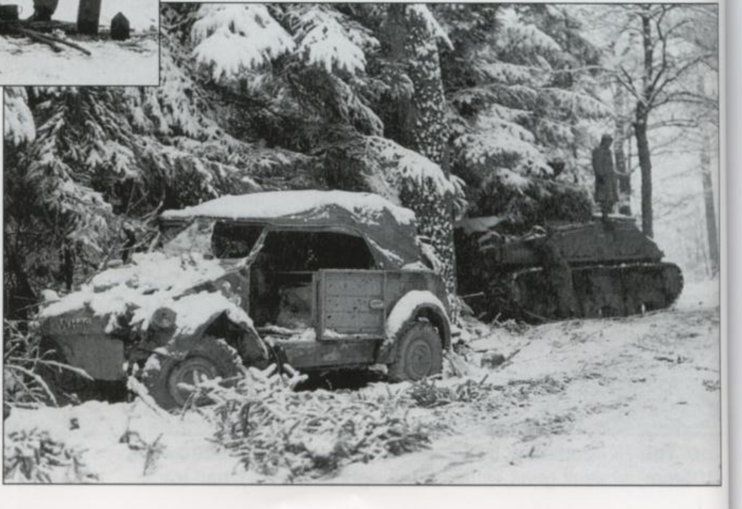
The HQ company of 2/32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division move forward near Marche, Belgium on 31 December 1944. The tanks are M4 (105mm) assault guns, while to the right is a M3A1 half-track.



Tanks of the 2nd Armored Division support the 84th Division during the fighting near Amonines, Belgium on 2 January 1945. The lead tank appears to be a composite hull M4. It is fitted with the T54 metal chevron tracks with duck bill extenders. There was quite a bit of variation in the detail of the duck bills, as many were manufactured locally in shops in Belgium and France.

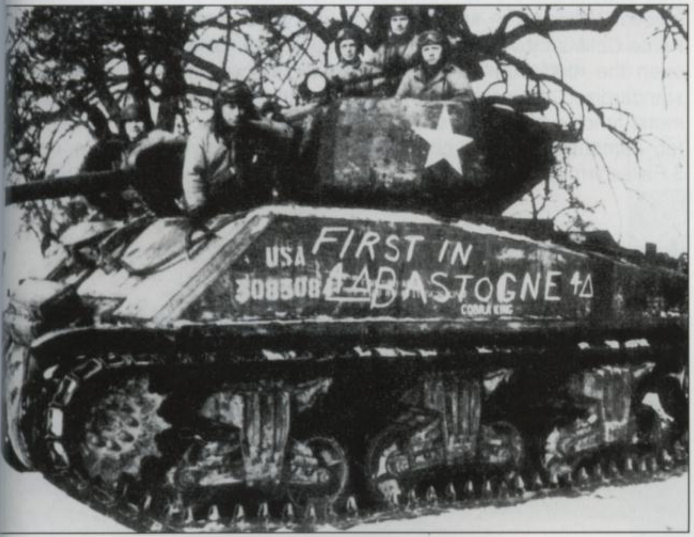


The crew of a M5A1 light tank of the 2nd Armored Division cooks a meal near their tank during the fighting in the Ardennes on 5 January 1945. By this time, the M5A1 was being replaced with the newer M24 light tank, but preference went to the cavalry squadrons rather than the light tank companies.

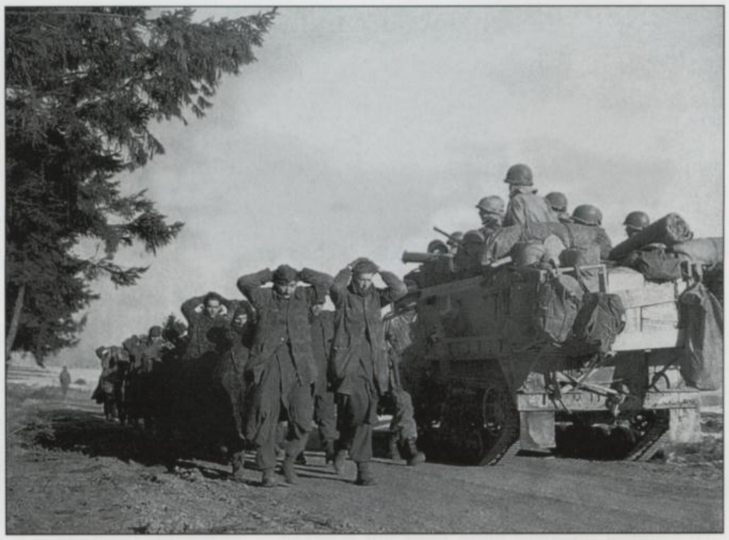


By January, the snow began to settle more heavily in the Ardennes. Here, a M4 medium tank takes shelter alongside a road with a destroyed German Küblewagen utility vehicle in the foreground.

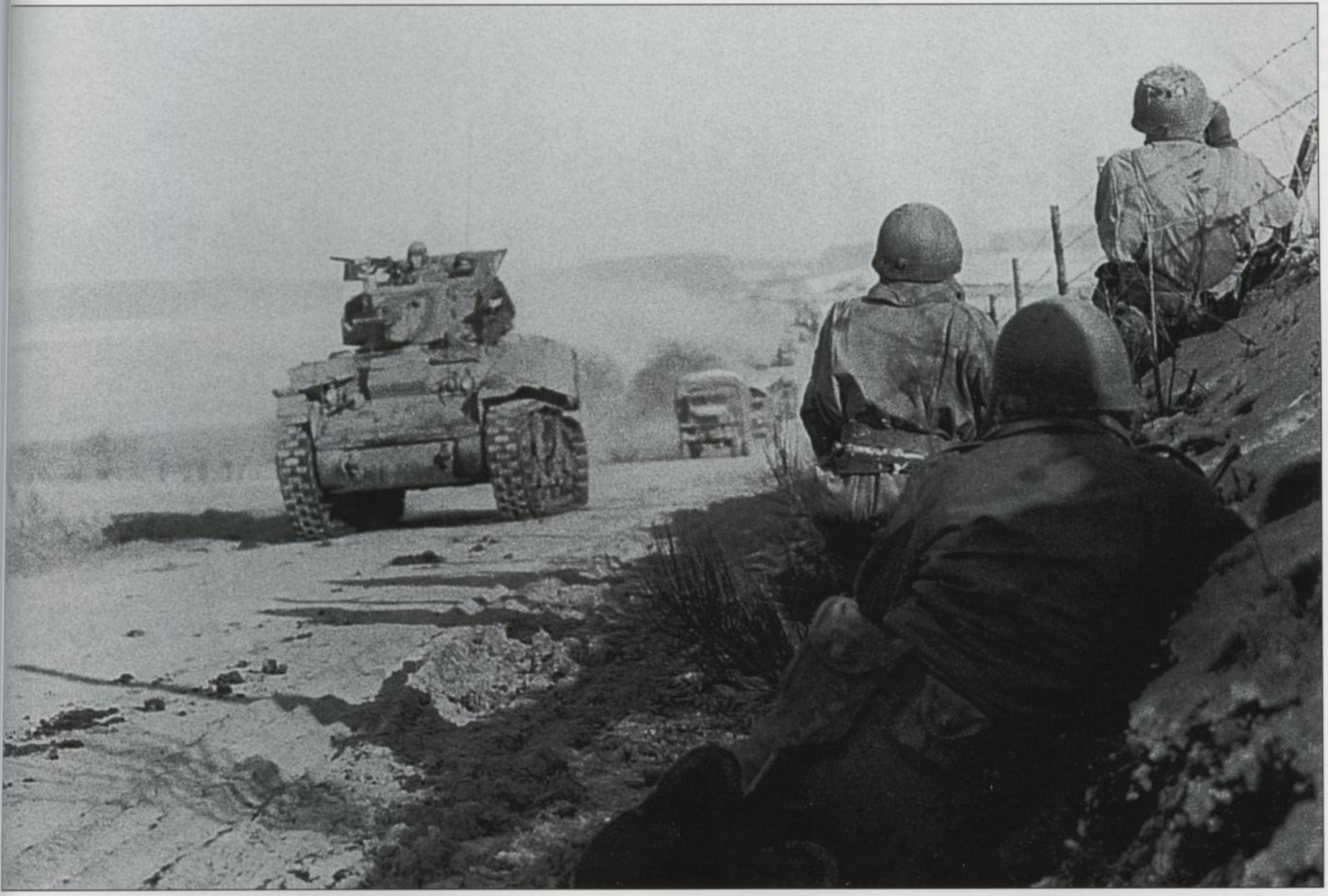
Patton Relieves Bastogne



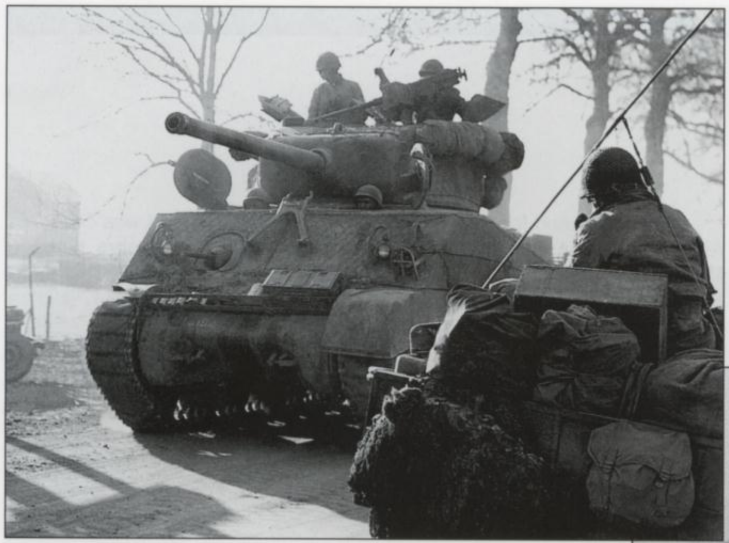
The spearhead for Patton's attempt to relieve Bastogne was CCA, 4th Armored Division. The first tank to enter Bastogne was "Cobra King", a M4A3E2 Jumbo of Co. C, 37th Tank Battalion, command by Lt. Charles P. Boggess. It is seen here after its arrival on 26 December 1944. (Patton Museum)



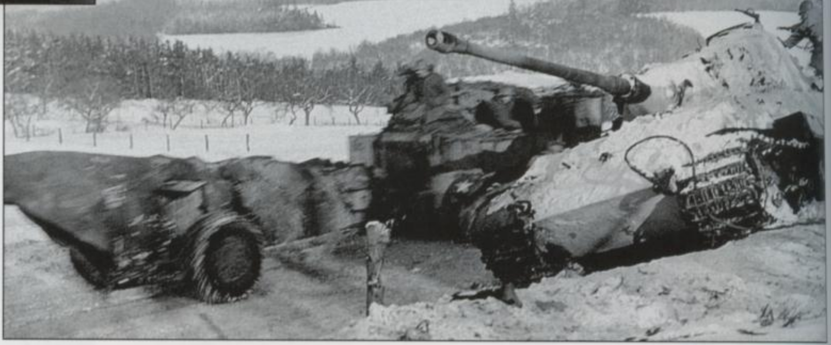
German prisoners walk past a M3A1 half-track of the 4th Armored Division on 27 December 1944 during the attempts by Patton's Third Army to relieve Bastogne. There was intense fighting along the route for the next several days as the Germans tried to sever the link between Bastogne and the Third Army.



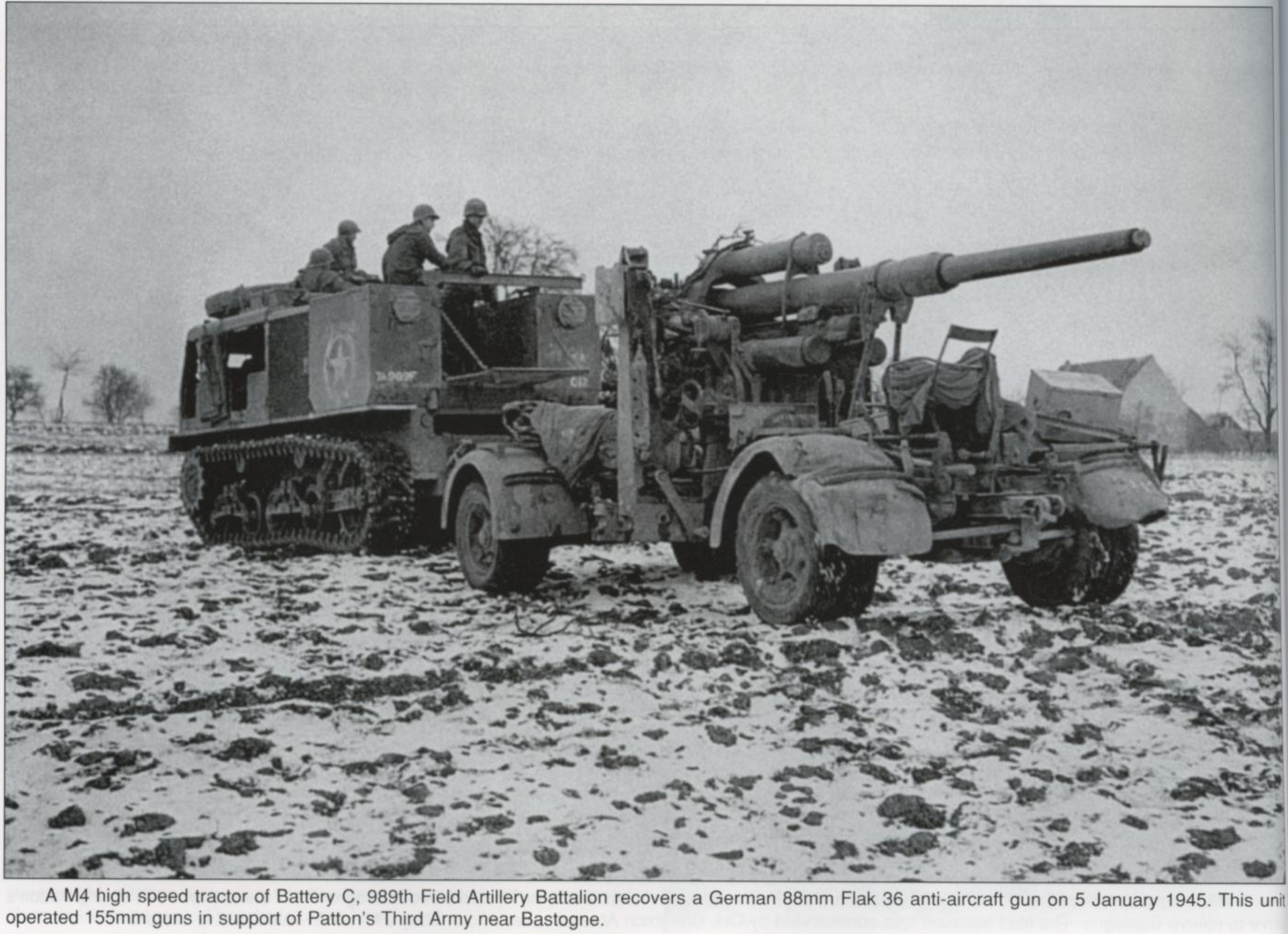
A M5A1 light tank from Co. D, 37th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division leads a column of trucks into Bastogne on 27 December 1944 during Patton's drive to relieve Bastogne. The lead battalion was commanded by Col. Creighton Abrams, after whom today's M1 main battle tank is named.



With its CCR trapped in Bastogne, the CCA of 9th Armored Division was attached to the 4th Armored Division to take part in the operations to relieve Bastogne. A M4A3 (76mm) of Co. C, 19th Tank Battalion, Task Force Collins moves forward on 27 December 1944 as part of the effort to open the road from Neufchateau to Bastogne. The tank is fitted with a standardized engineer camouflage kit with Sommerfield matting, a type of metal fencing, designed to permit the crew to attach branches and foliage for camouflage. This company seized the town of Sibret from the 5.Fallschirmjäger Division that day, capturing about forty prisoners.

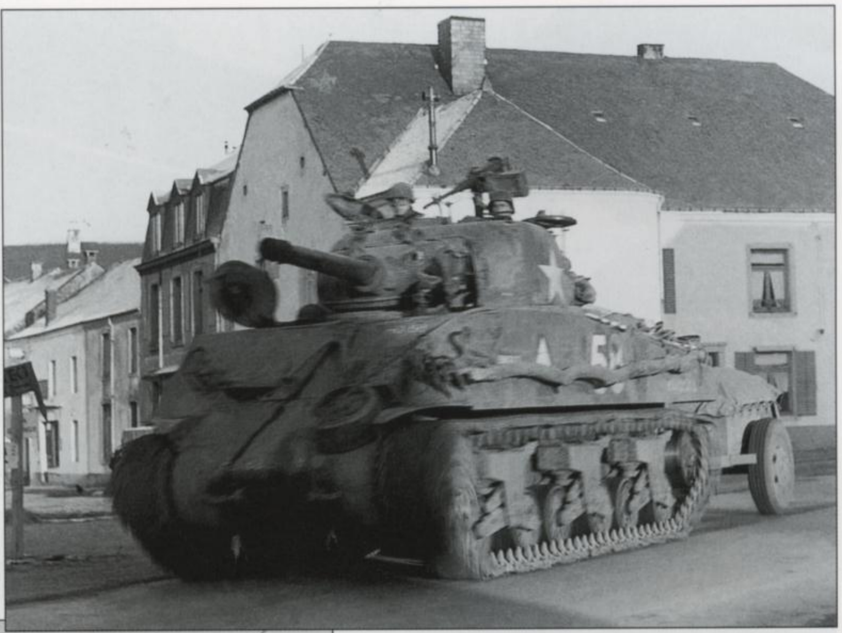


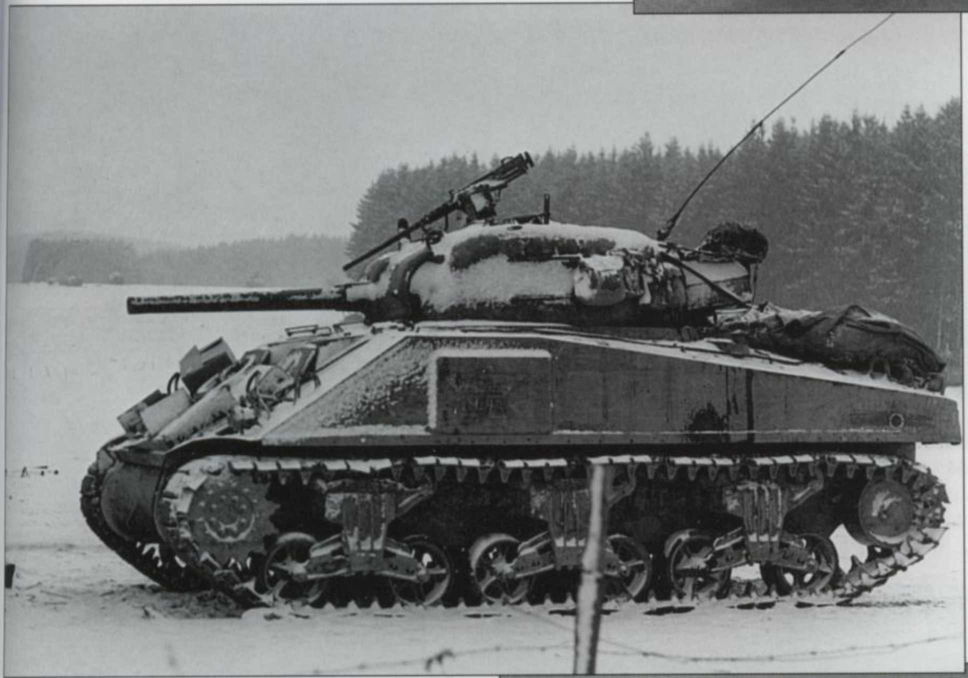
Surviving King Tigers of the s.SS-Pz.Abt. 501 were shifted to the Bastogne front in late December 1944 where they formed Kampfgruppe Mobius. They took part in the futile attempts by 1.SS-Panzer Division to stop Patton's spearhead, the 4th Armored Division. At least two King Tigers were abandoned on 8 January 1945, including this one in the outskirts of Lutremange. Alongside is a US Army M5 high speed tractor towing a 155mm howitzer.



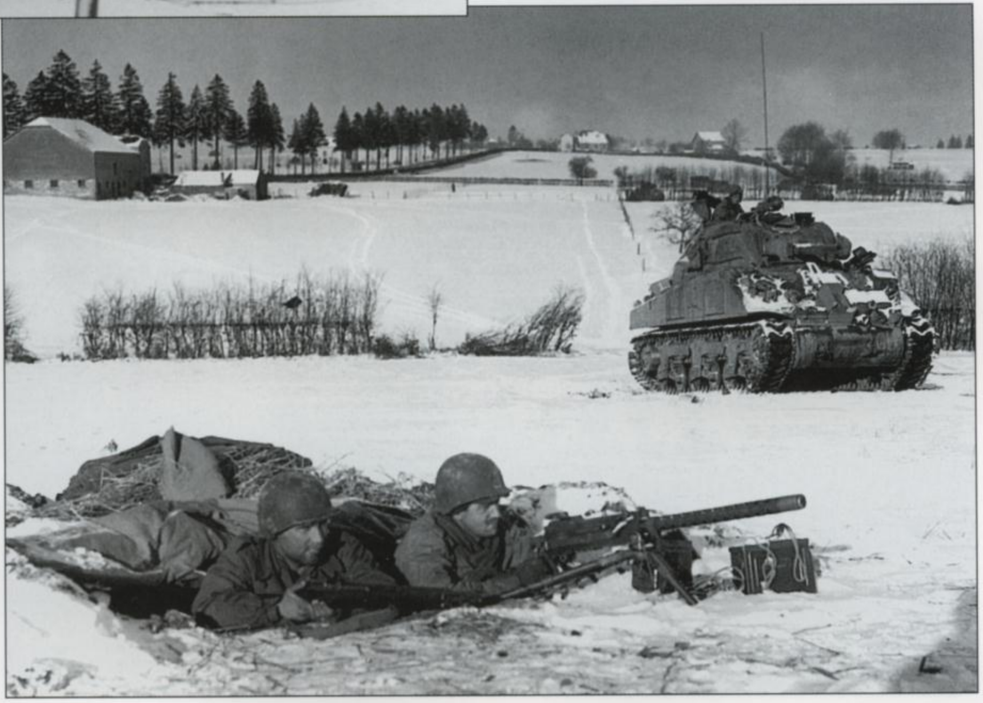
A M4 high speed tractor of Battery C, 989th Field Artillery Battalion recovers a German 88mm Flak 36 anti-aircraft gun on 5 January 1945. This unit operated 155mm guns in support of Patton's Third Army near Bastogne.

A M4 (105mm) assault gun of the HQ company, 68th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division moves forward to Bastogne through Habay-la-Neuve on 29 December 1944. The 6th Armored Division was sent into Bastogne to take part in efforts to break the encirclement on the eastern side of the town in mid-January.

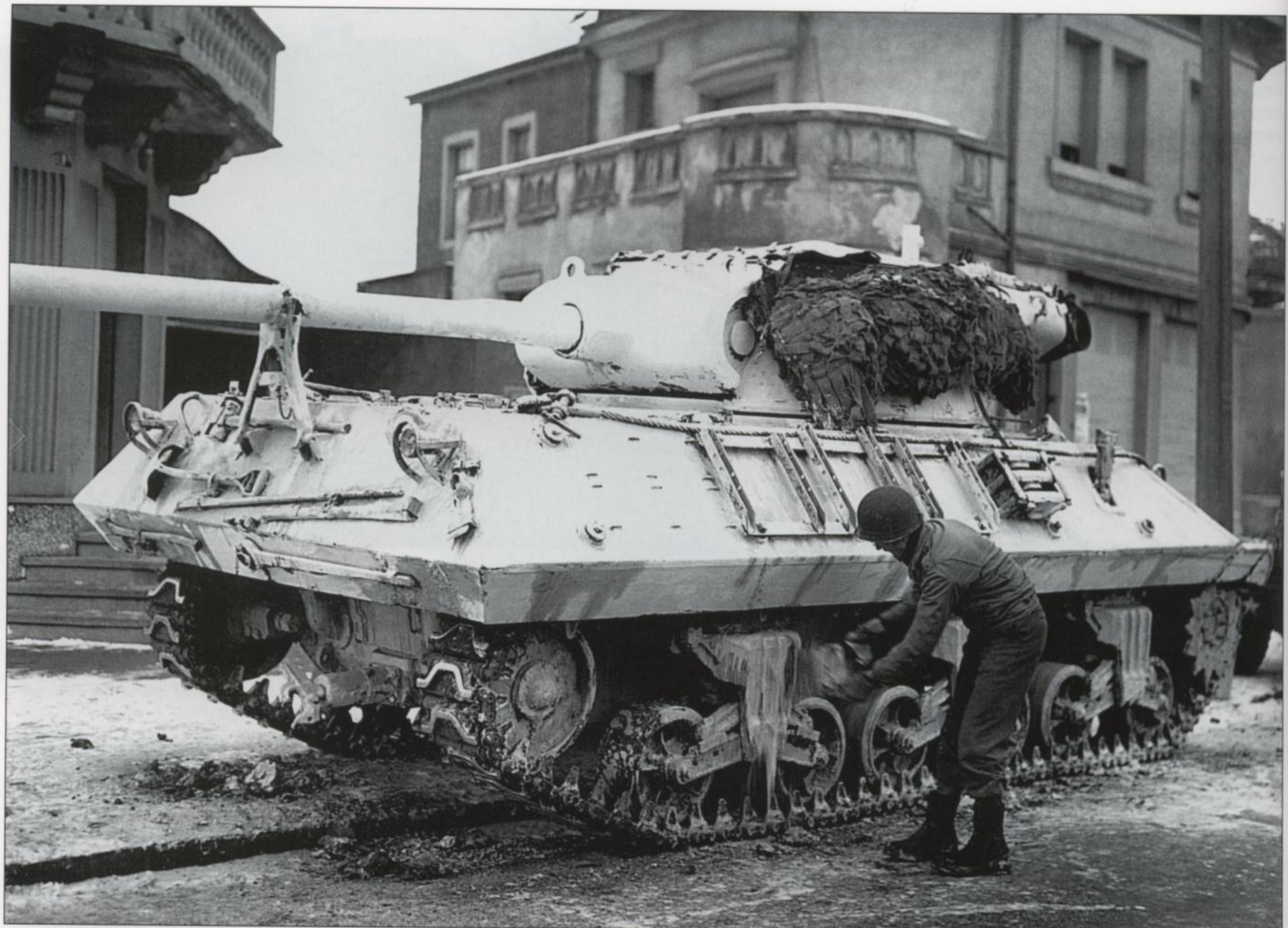




Once the 37th Tank Battalion reached Bastogne, there remained the difficult task of keeping the road open between Patton's Third Army and the town. After Christmas, the remainder of the 4th Armored Division was used to widen the breach. This is a snow covered M4A3 of the 35th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division operating in the approaches to Bastogne near Sainlex on 31 December 1944.



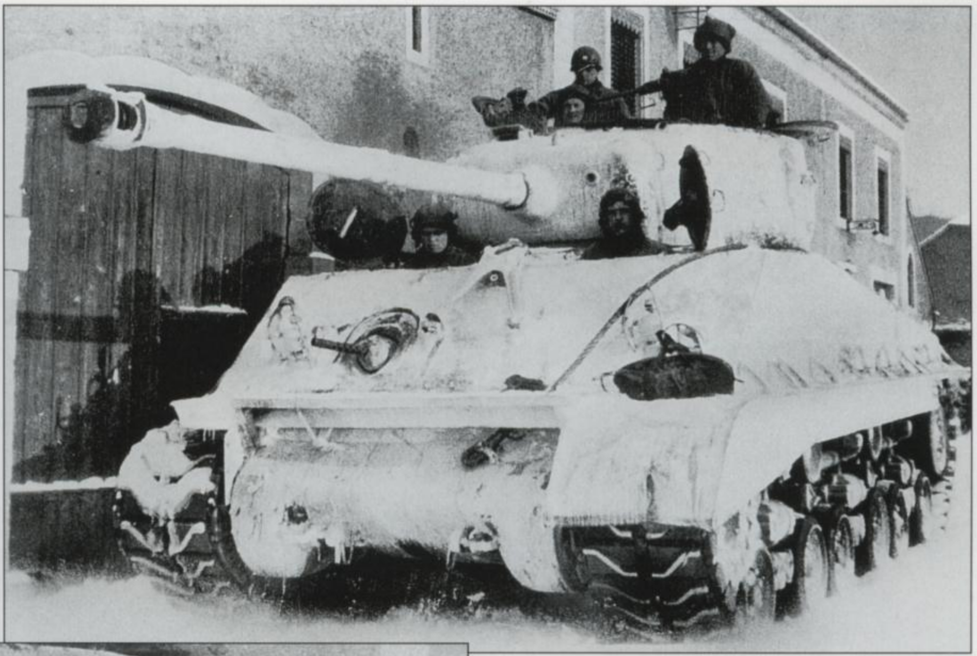
A M4A3 of the 4th Armored Division passes by the foxhole of armored infantry from the division during operations in the outskirts of Bastogne on 3 January 1945.

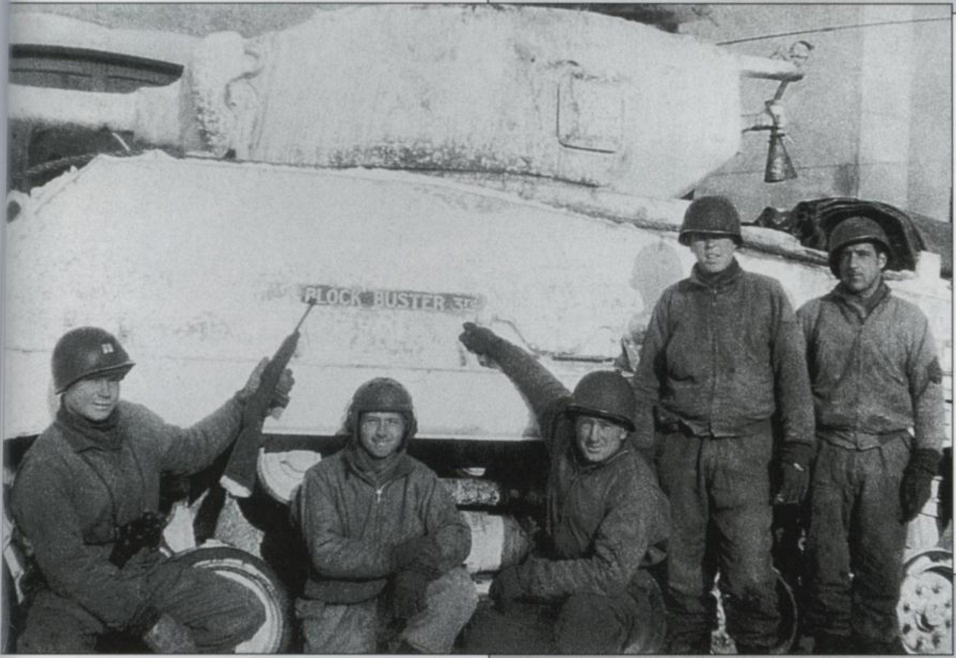


As snow closed in during the early winter of 1944-45, more and more US vehicles received a quick coat of whitewash like this M36 90mm GMC from one of the units of Patton's Third Army operating in Luxembourg in the final phase of the Battle of the Bulge on 3 January 1945. These paint jobs were often done in haste with mops, or in this case, with buckets.

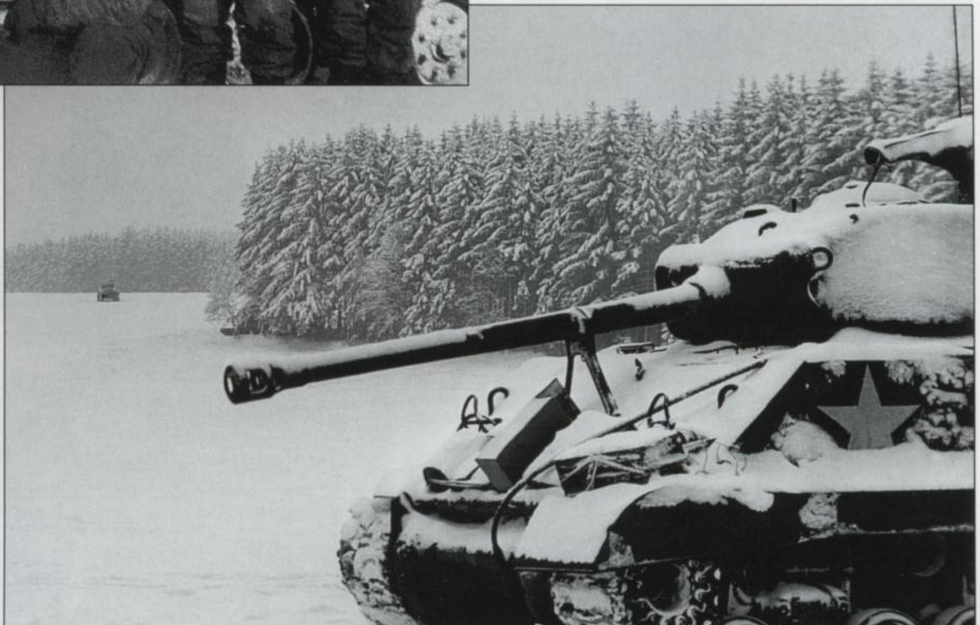
A M4A1 (76mm) medium tank of the 774th Tank Battalion is supporting troops of the 83rd Division as they pass through Bihain, Belgium on 11 January 1945.

The Battle of the Bulge was the debut for the ew M4A3 with HVSS suspension, called at the me by the tankers as the "M4A3 (76mm) with 23 ch track", and later as the M4A3E8. This is the nk of the Co. B commander, Capt. James each. (J. Leach)

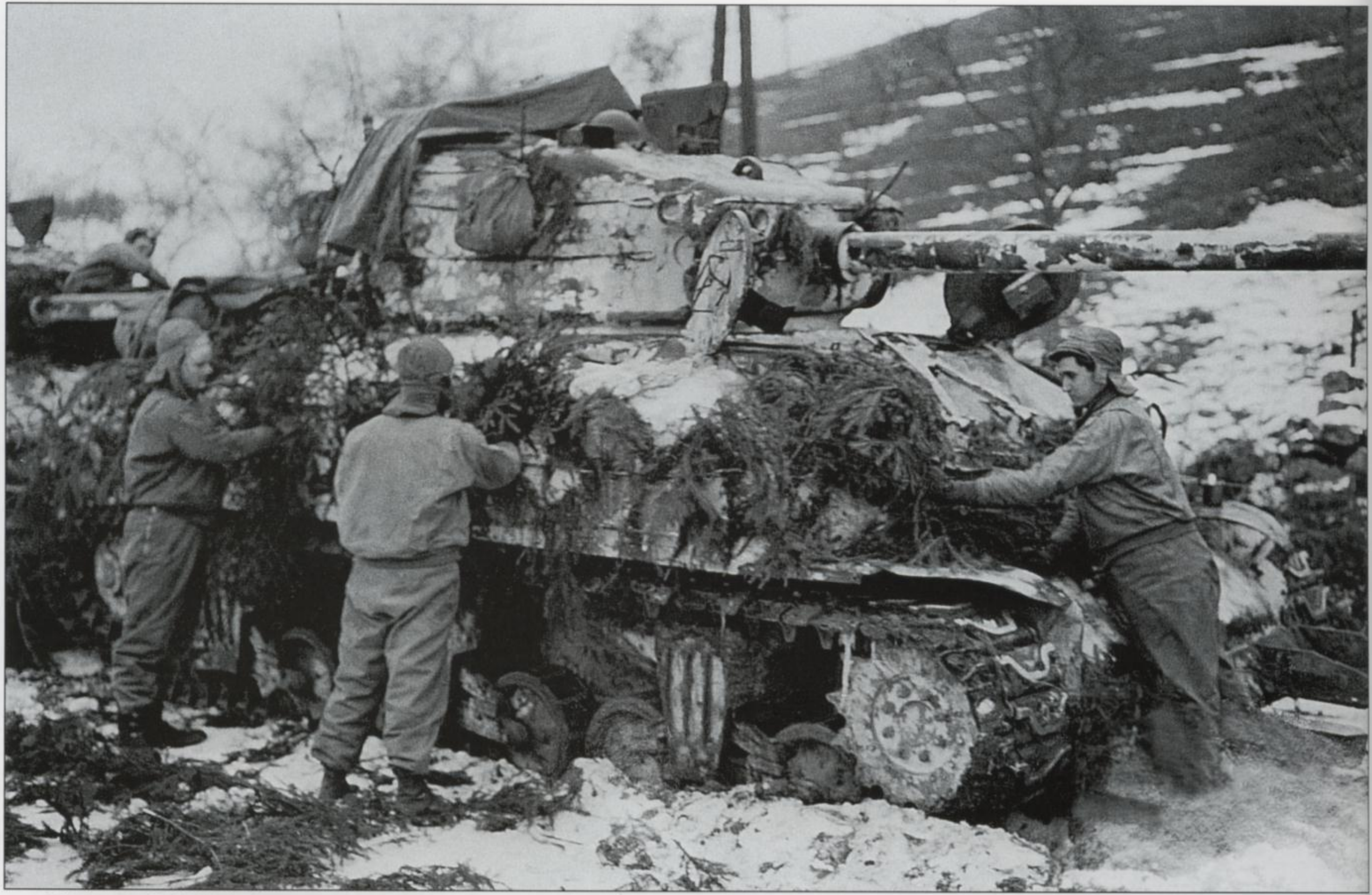




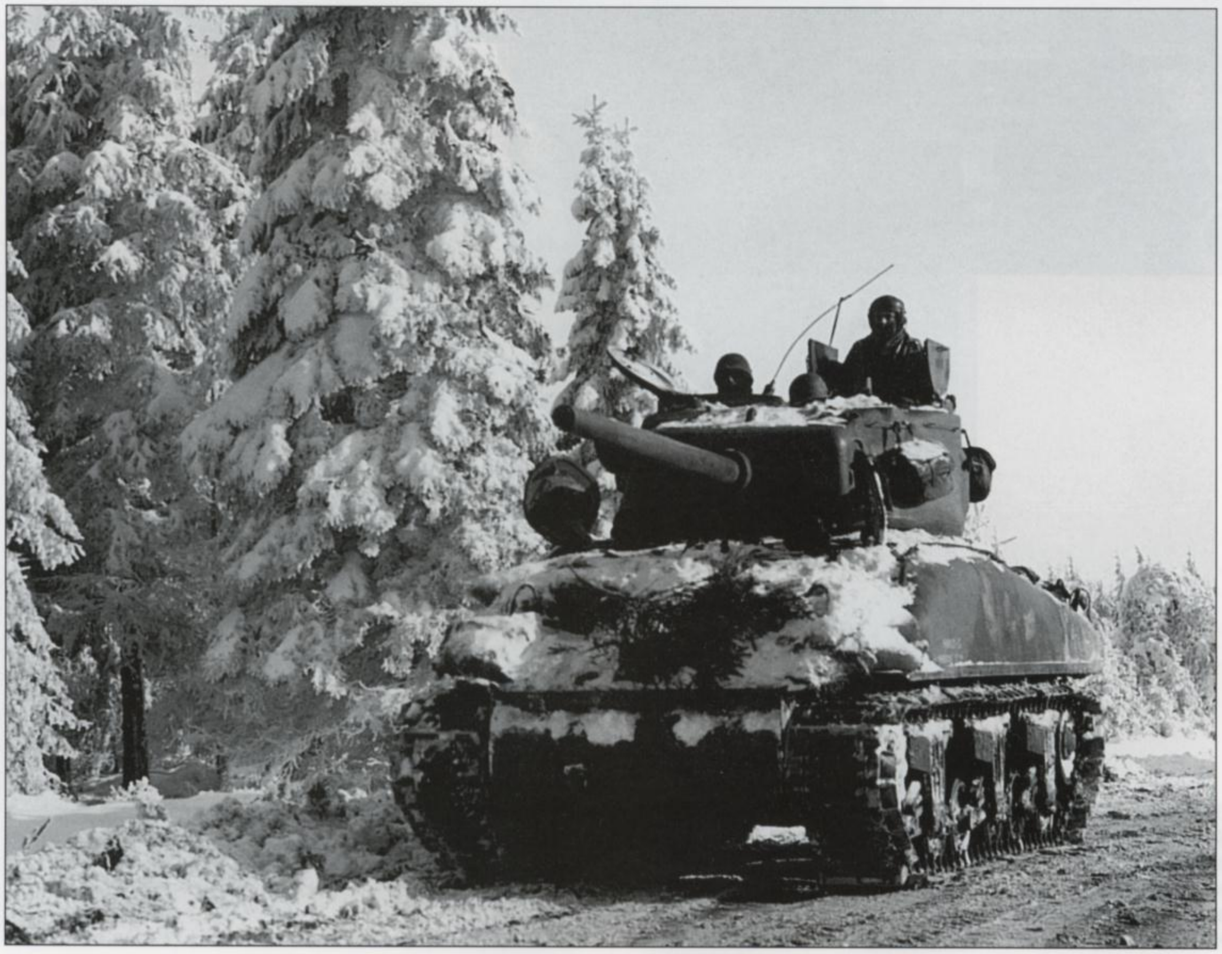
A close-up of the side of Leach's M4A3E8, with the captain pointing at the tank's name "Block Buster 3D". This was the third Sherman operated by the crew since 1944. (J. Leach)



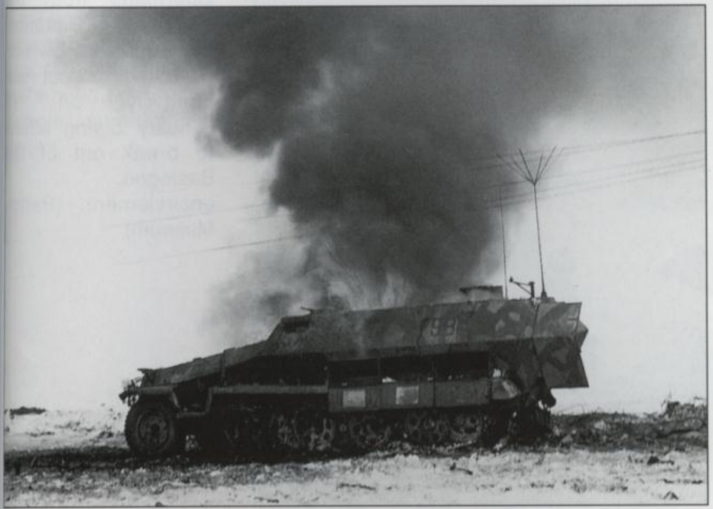
One of the new M4A3E8 medium tanks of the 35th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division during operations near Bastogne on 8 January 1945. This is evidently a very new vehicle as it was the usual practice to remove the sand skirts which interfered with suspension maintenance.



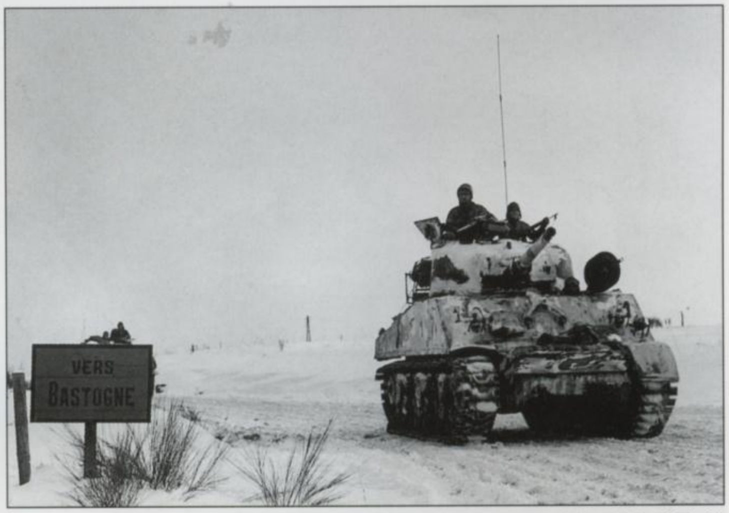
The crew of a M4A1 (76mm) of the 4th Armored Division add foliage to their tank in an effort to improve its camouflage near Kiewelbach, Luxembourg on 18 January 1945. This tank is fitted with metal chevron track and duck bill end extenders.



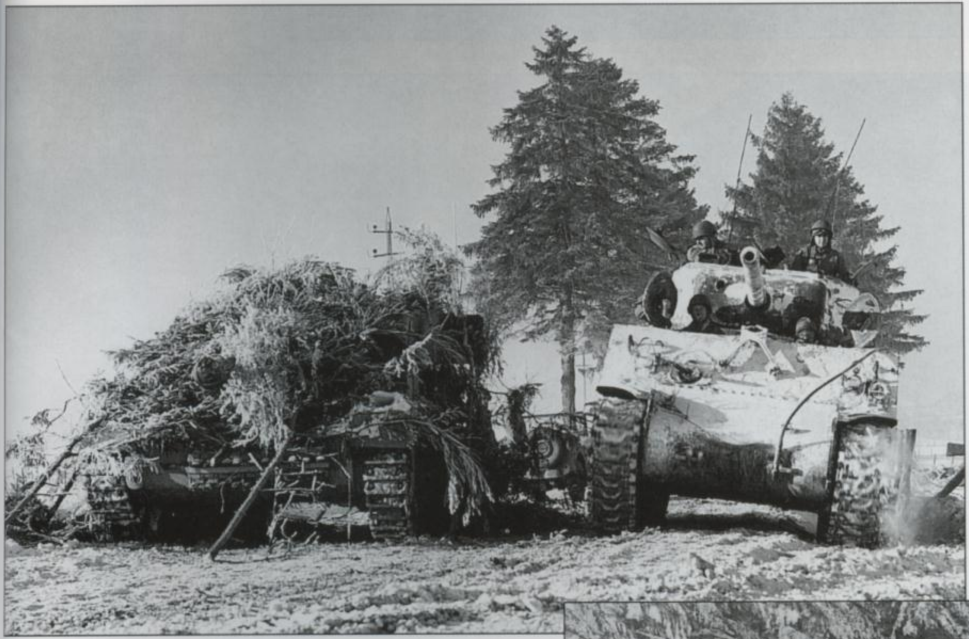
A M4A1 (76mm) moves along a snow-covered road near Odeigne, Belgium on 11 January 1945. It has extended end-connectors fitted to the track for better floatation in snow.



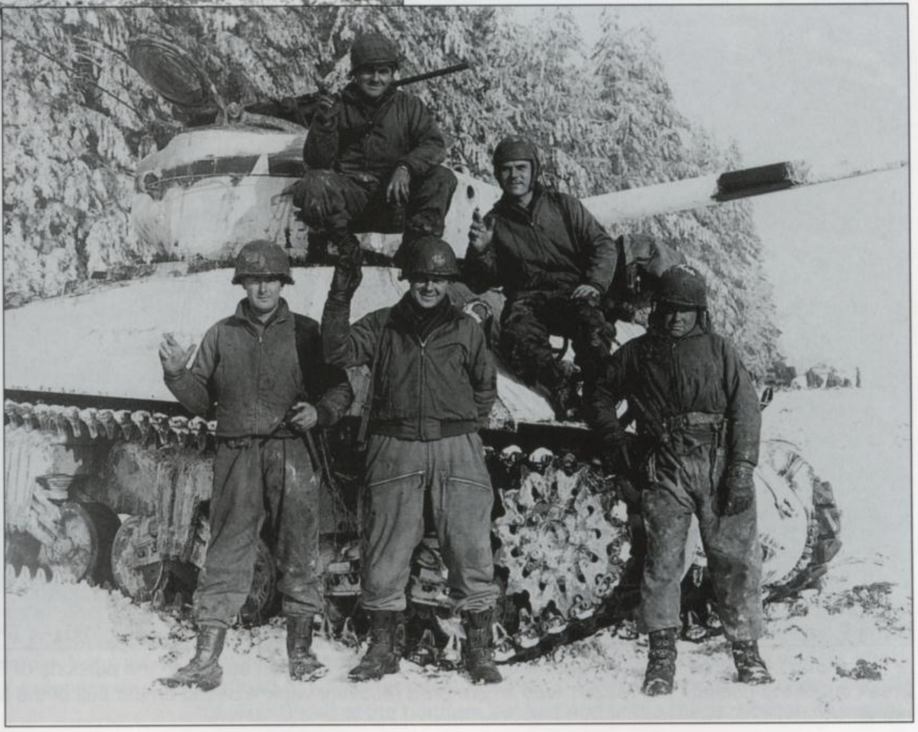
This SdKfz 251/6 command post half-track was set on fire after its capture near Jodenville by US combat engineers due to the large amount of munitions it was carrying. It may have been part of the Panzer Lehr Division.



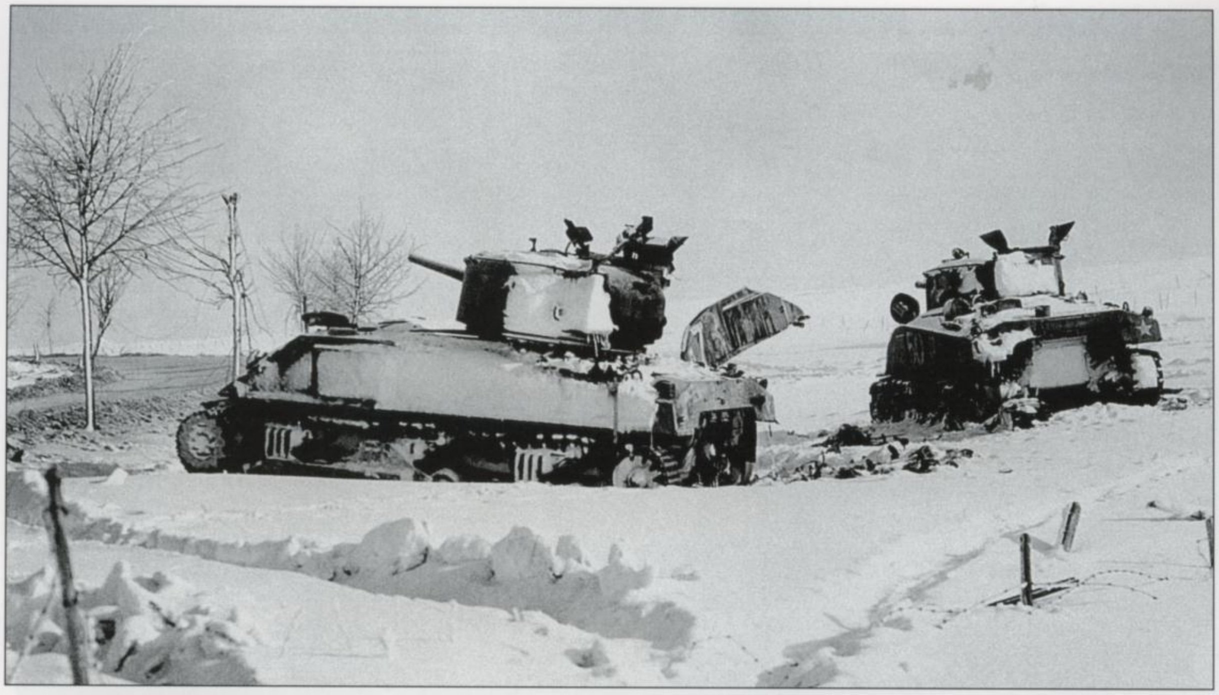
A M4 medium tank being used for forward observers of the 492nd Field Artillery moves towards Longchamps on 13 January 1945. The road sign reads "vers Bastogne": Towards Bastogne.



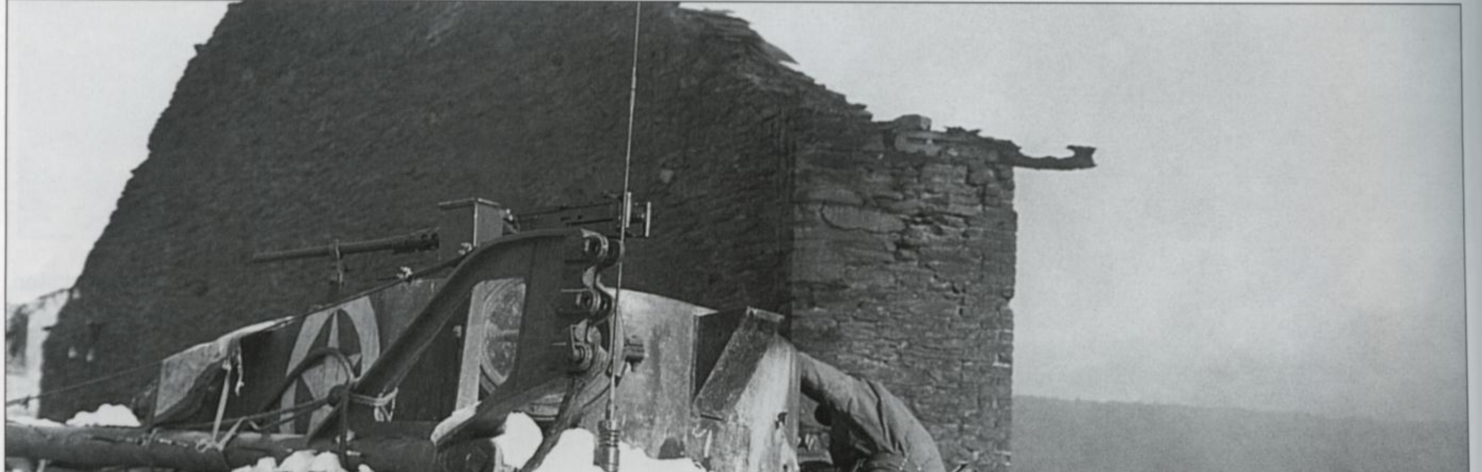
A M4A3 (76mm) of the 42nd Tank Battalion, 11th Armored Division passes by an abandoned German PzKpfw IV tank along the Houffalize road outside Bastogne on 15 January 1945. The 11th Armored Division had been one of the units used to widen the corridor into Bastogne at the end of December, then it took part in efforts to break out of the encirclement on the eastern side of the town.



The crew of an M4A3 (76mm) command tank of Capt. John Megglesin of the 42nd Tank Battalion, 11th Armored Division, cross their fingers for luck. This new tank was the third they had been issued in two weeks of fighting. The two previous tanks had been knocked out, fortunately without the loss of a single crewman. It was a grim statistic that on average, one crewman was killed every time a Sherman tank was knocked out.

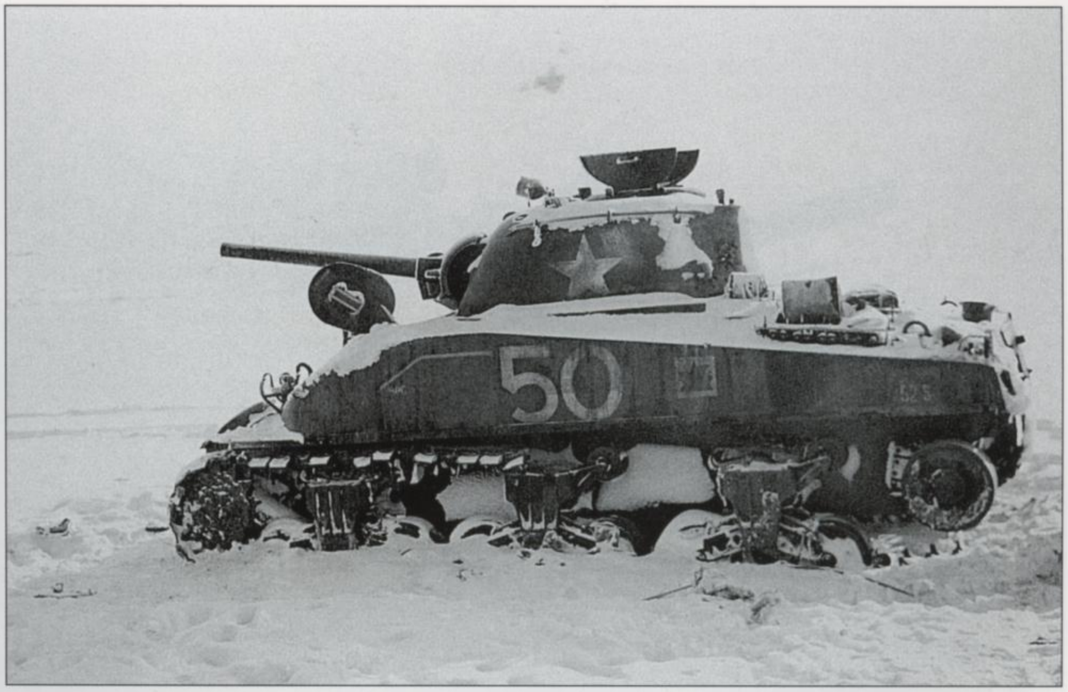


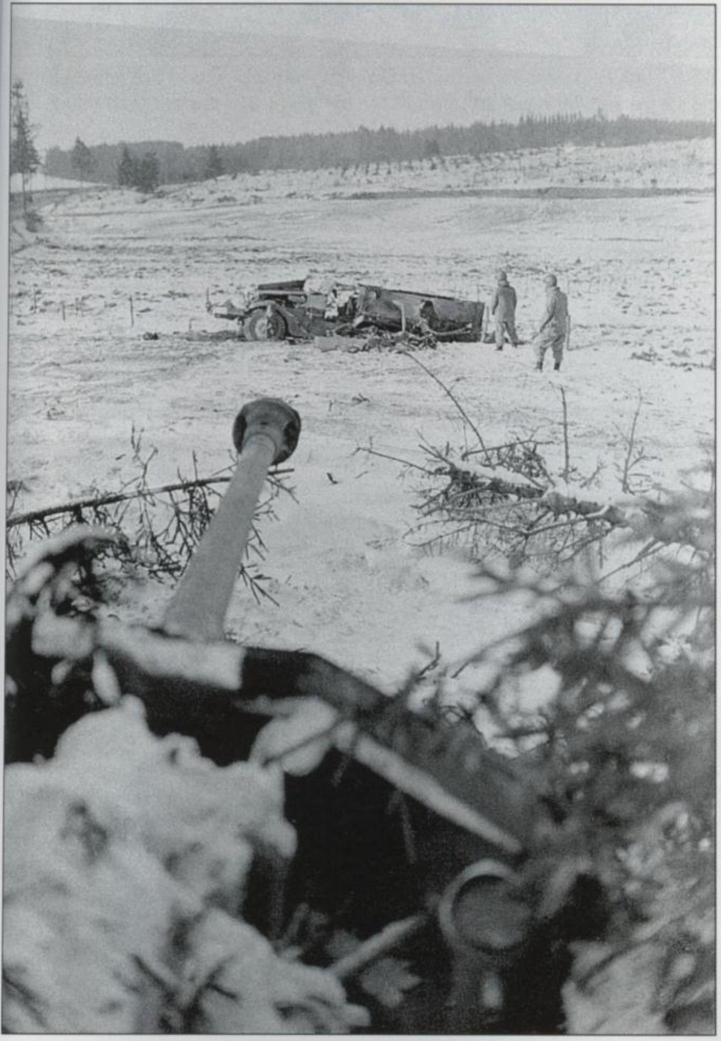
This pair of Shermans from the 15th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division were knocked out near Longvilly on 16 January during efforts to break out of the Bastogne encirclement. (Patton Museum)



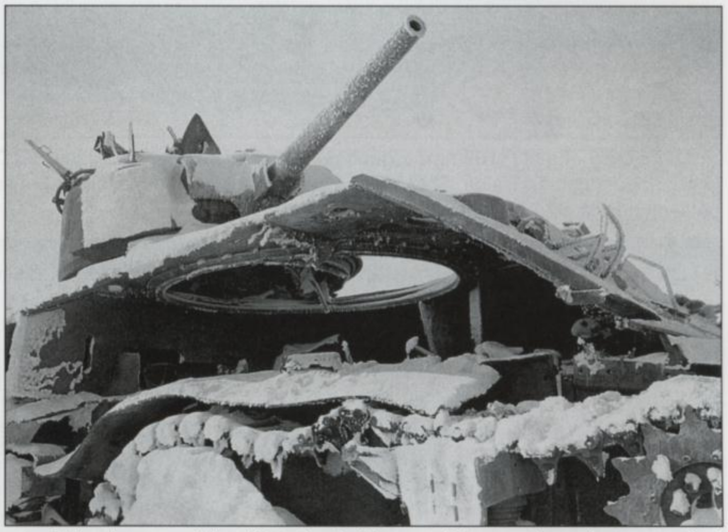
A M32B1 armored recovery vehicle of the 6th Armored Division moves to the outskirts of Bastogne on 14 January 1945 in anticipation of the push to break out of the pocket. The M32B1 was an armored recovery vehicle based on the hull of the M4A1 tank, fitted with a new turret, a winch, and an A-frame crane.

This M4 composite hull medium tank was the one on the right from one of the previous photos. Carrying tactical number 50, it also carries the battalion's tactical marking on the rear side, a wolf's head on a tricolor armored force triangle, superimposed on a white square.

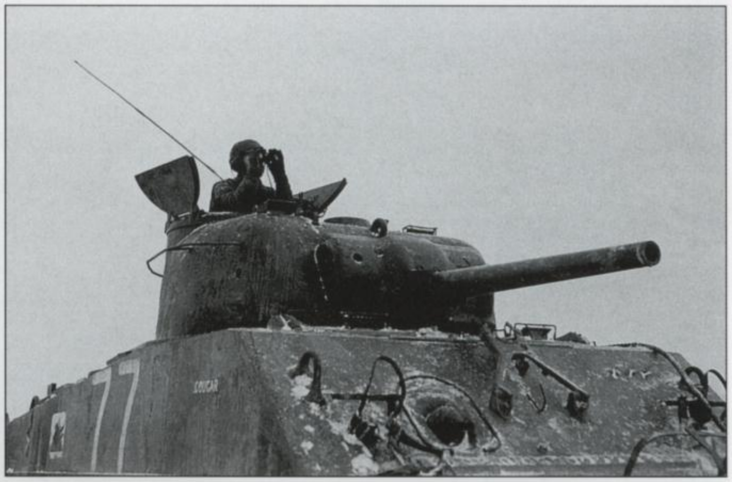




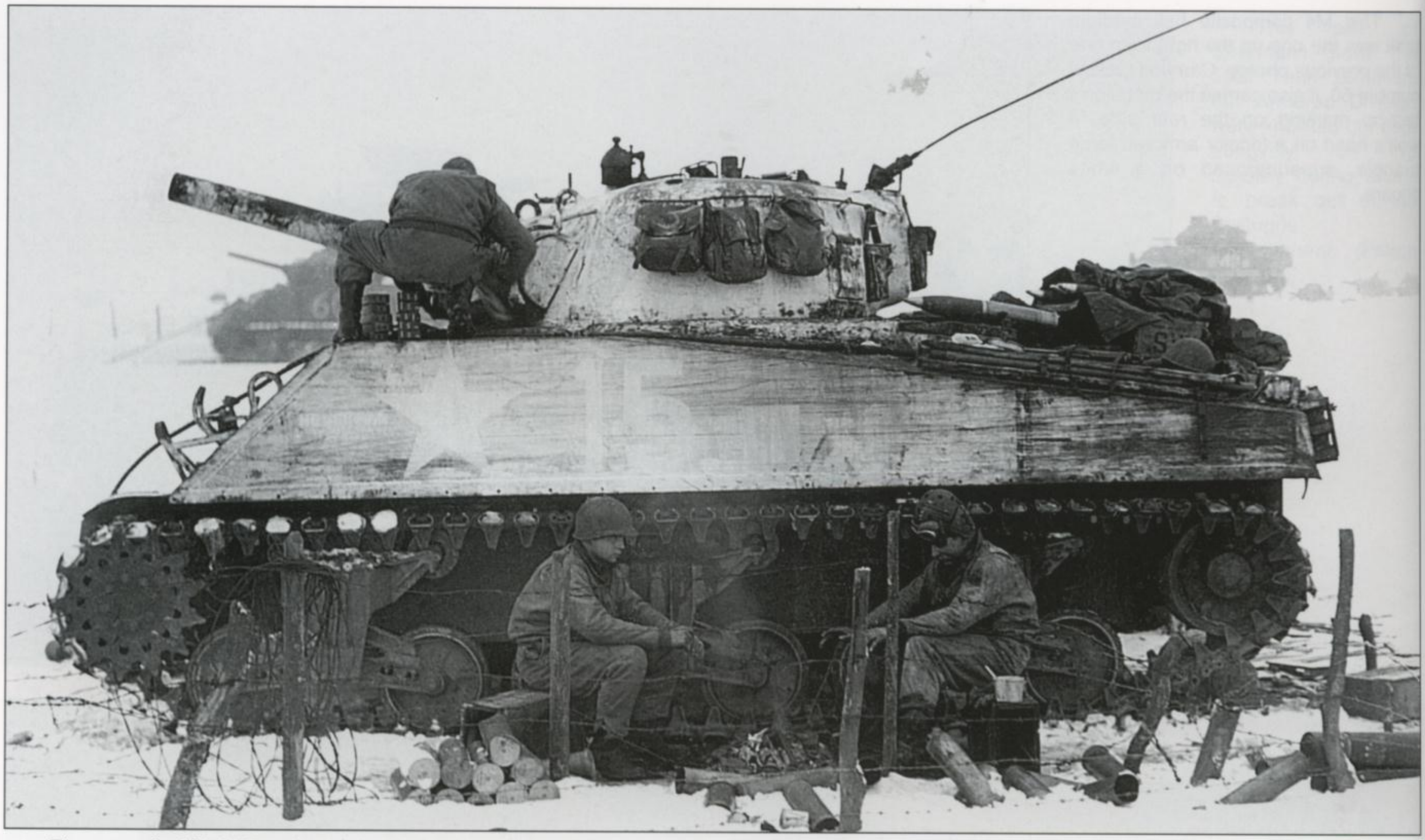
A curious photo showing the view from behind a German 75mm PaK 40 anti-tank gun that knocked out the M3 half-track of the 6th Armored Division seen in the foreground on 16 January 1945 near Wardin, Belgium. The German anti-tank gun was subsequently put out of action by the accompanying armored infantry. (Patton Museum)



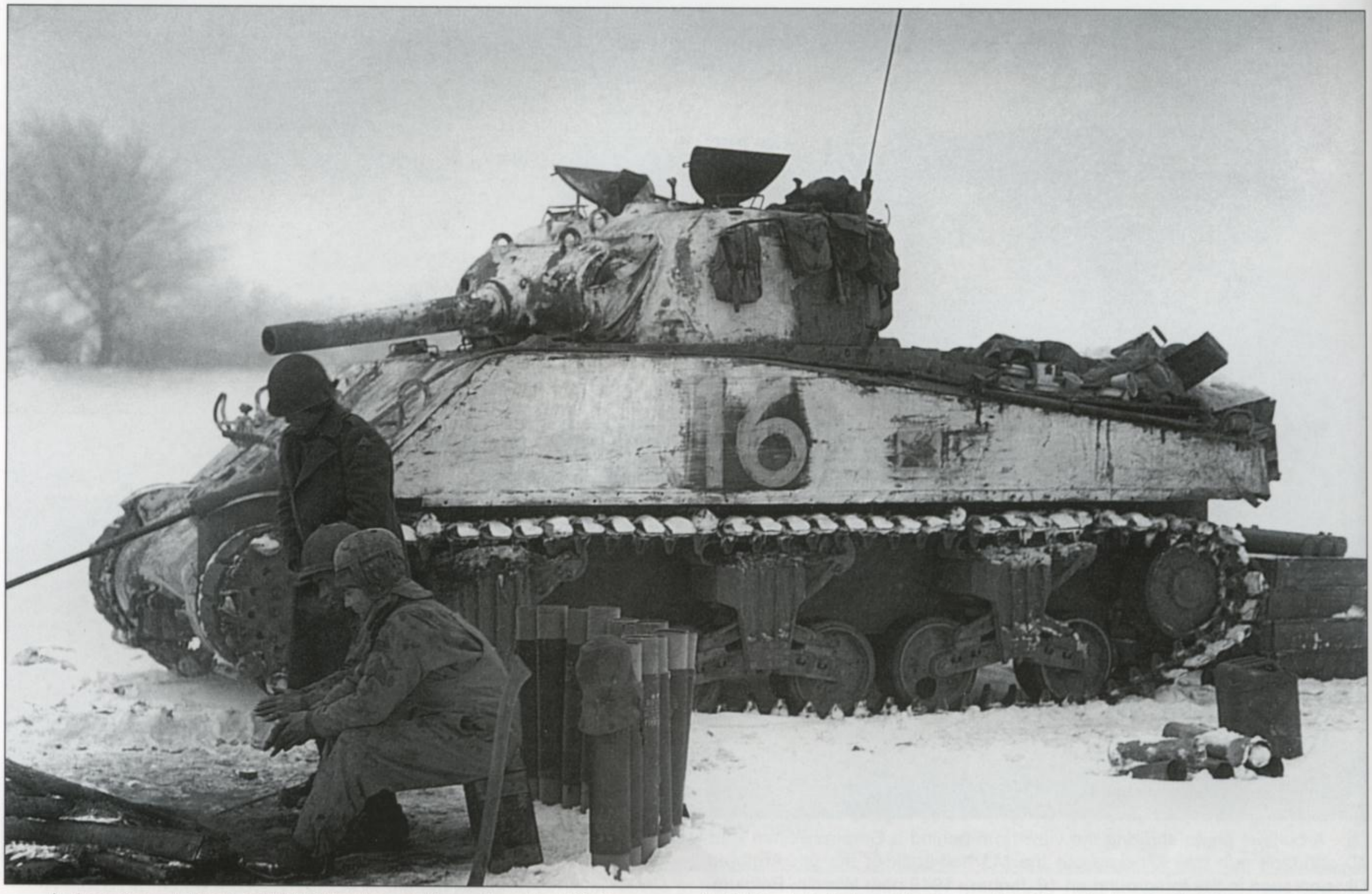
This close-up of the M4 to the left in one of the previous photos, tactical number 73, shows the results of a massive internal ammunition explosion that has peeled the right side armor back and blown the turret off the turret race.



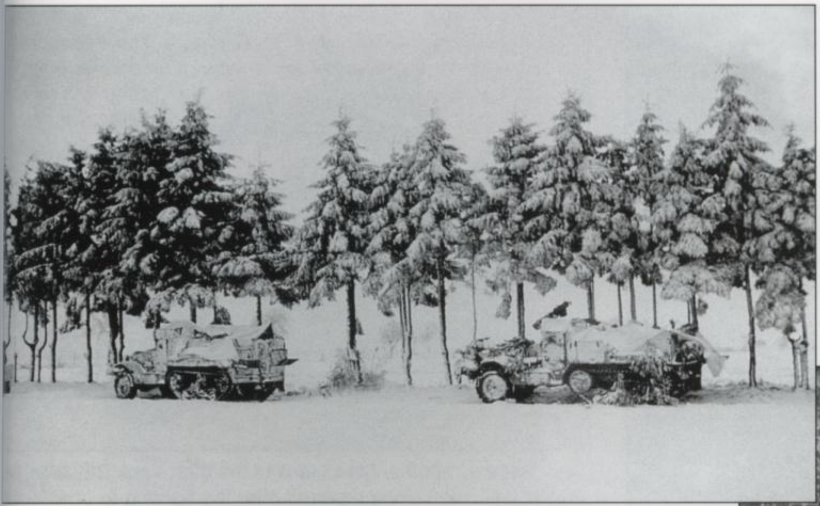
A M4A3 of Co. C, 15th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division during the push to the north-east of Bastogne in mid-January 1945. This tank, named Cougar, carries the tactical number 77, also its radio call-sign. This attack was part of a broader push by Patton's Third Army from Bastogne, towards "Skyline Drive" at the northern eastern end of the Bulge. (Patton Museum)



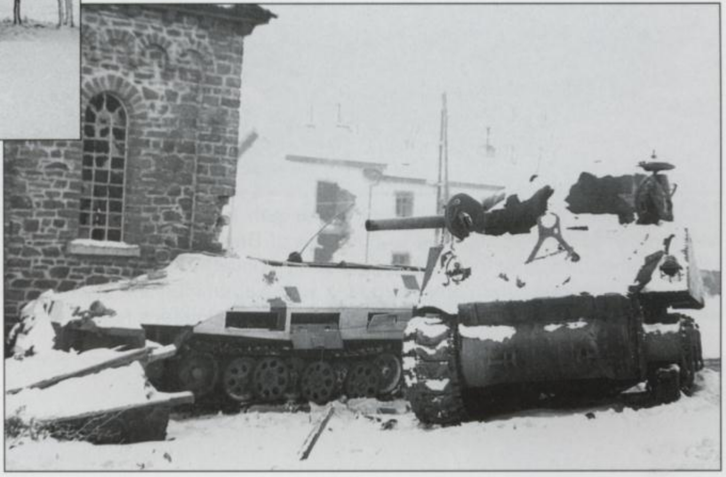
The crew of a M4 (105mm) assault gun, tactical number 15, of the HQ Co., 15th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division warm up over a fire while waiting for another support mission. These tanks were used to provide indirect fire support for the regular medium tanks of the battalion, and expended casings can be seen scattered around the tank.



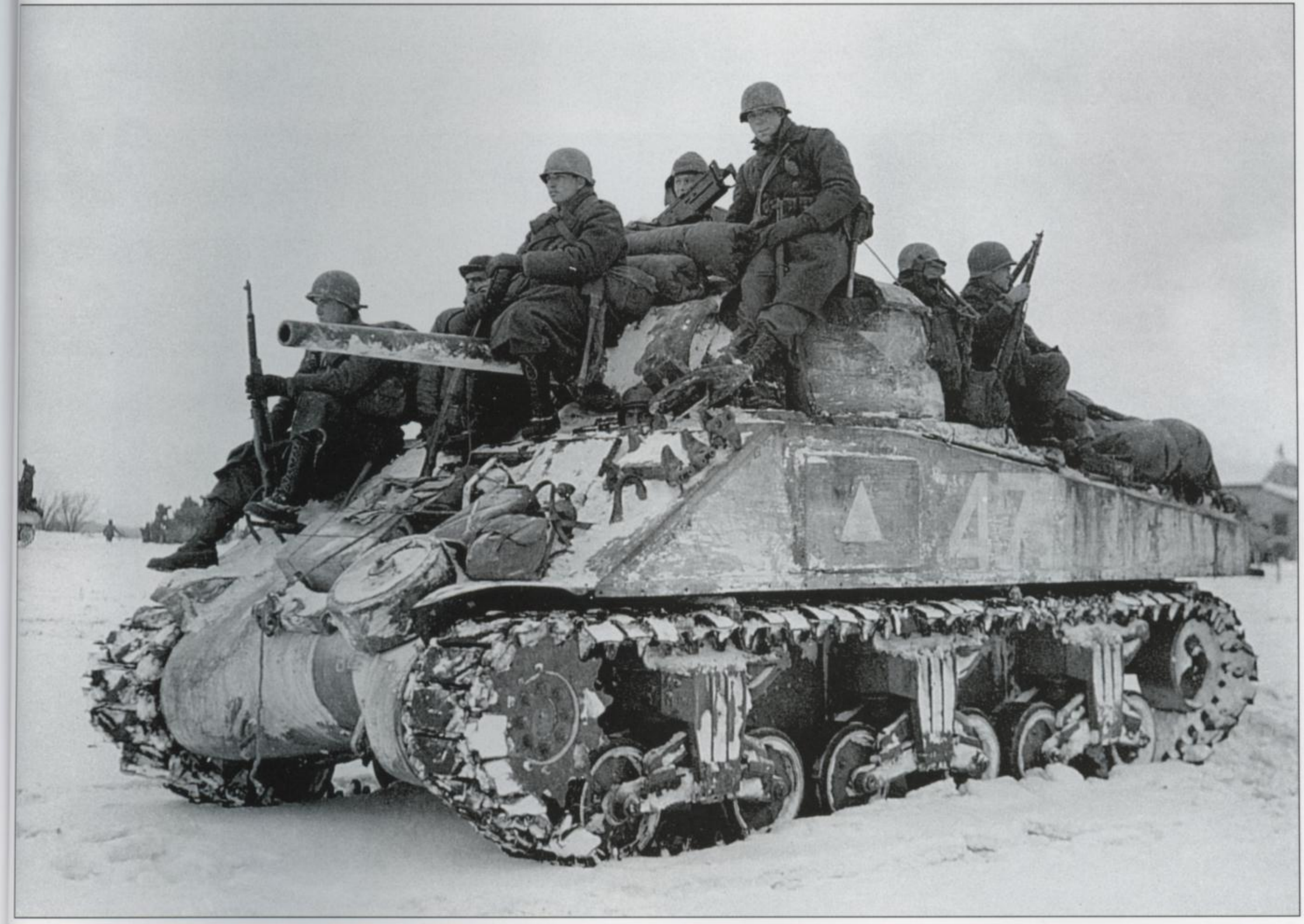
A view of a neighboring M4 (105mm) assault gun from the HQ Company of 15th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division during the fighting to link up with the First Army near Houfallize in mid-January.



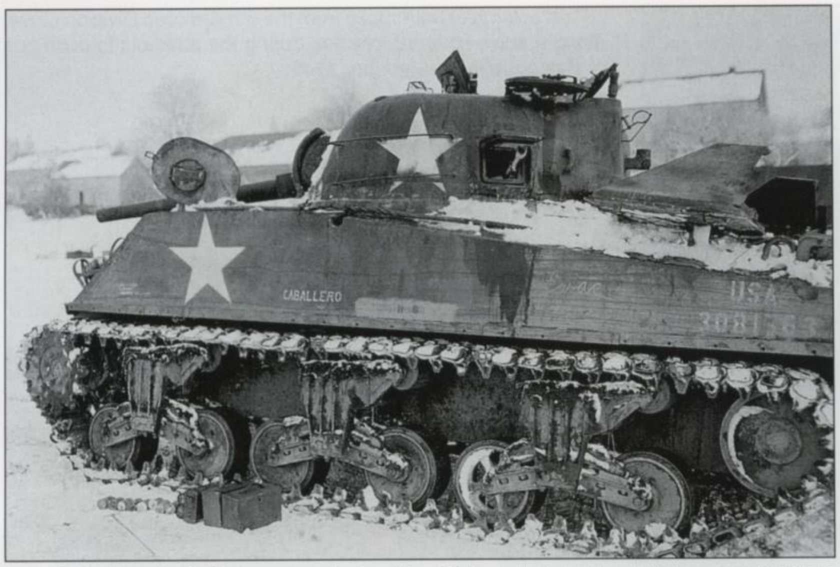
A column of half-tracks from the 6th Armored Division move along a snow covered tree line during the attempts to push out of Bastogne in late January 1945.



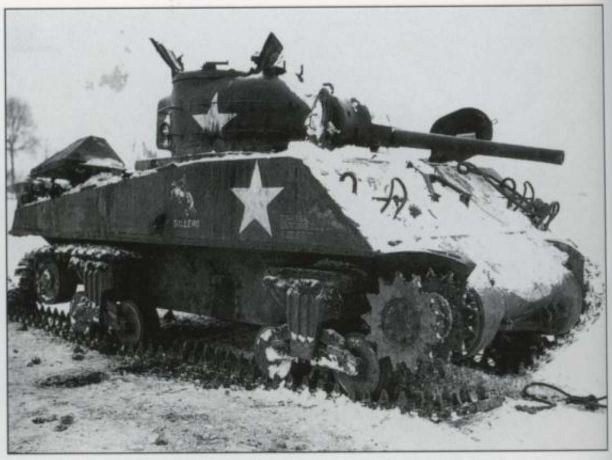
Some idea of the intensity of the fighting beyond Bastogne is evident in this photo. The M4A3 from the 6th Armored Division has been knocked out at close range by a panzerfaust from the crew of the SdKfz 251 half-track that had taken refuge in the neighboring church on 17 January. The half-track is in Red Cross markings as an ambulance.



A M4 of the 68th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division carries infantry forward during the fighting in mid-January 1945. Its tactical number is 47 and it carries the white triangle typical of this battalion.

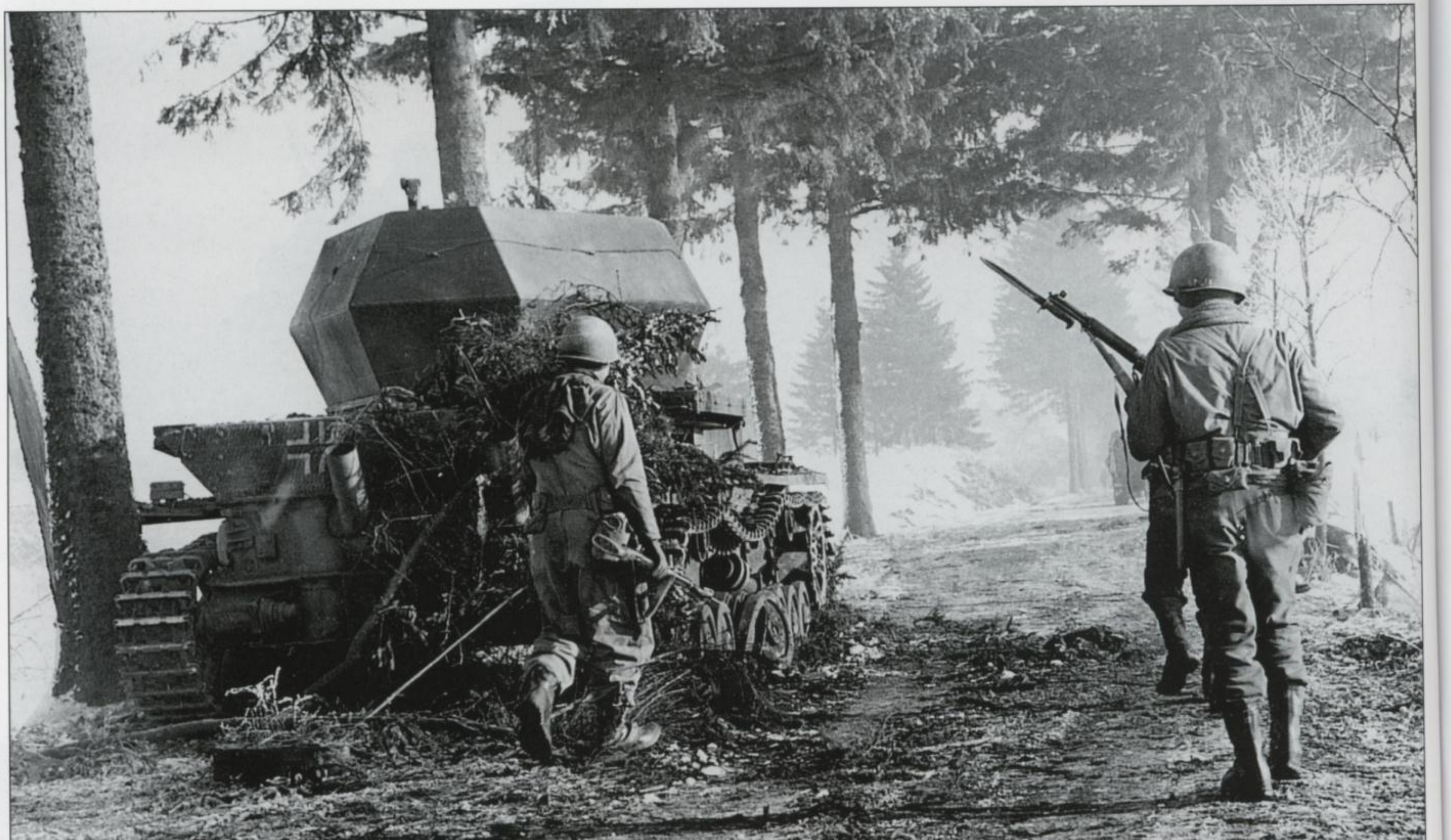


“Cabellero,” a M4A3 medium tank of the 69th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division being repaired after the fighting to push out of Bastogne in mid January 1945. It has taken a hit on the upper hull side immediately above the vehicle name. This is the late production version of the 75mm gun tank with wet ammunition stowage, the simplified 47 degree hull front and the modernized turret with a loader’s hatch.



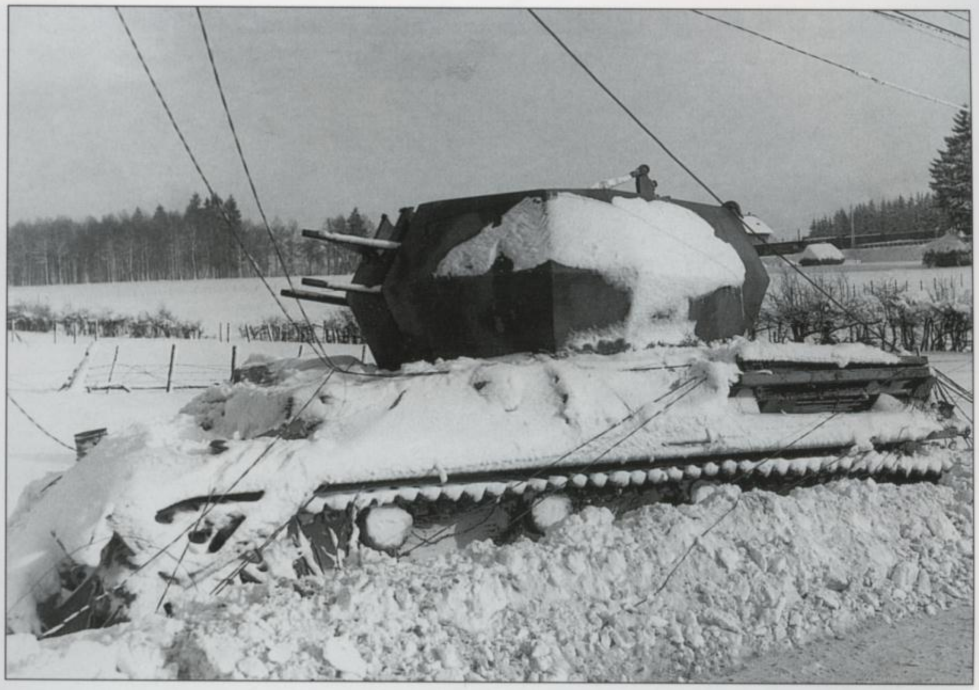
“Ballero,” another M4A3 tank of the 69th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division being repaired after the fighting to push out of Bastogne in mid January 1945. A hit can be seen to the immediate left of the vehicle name on the side.

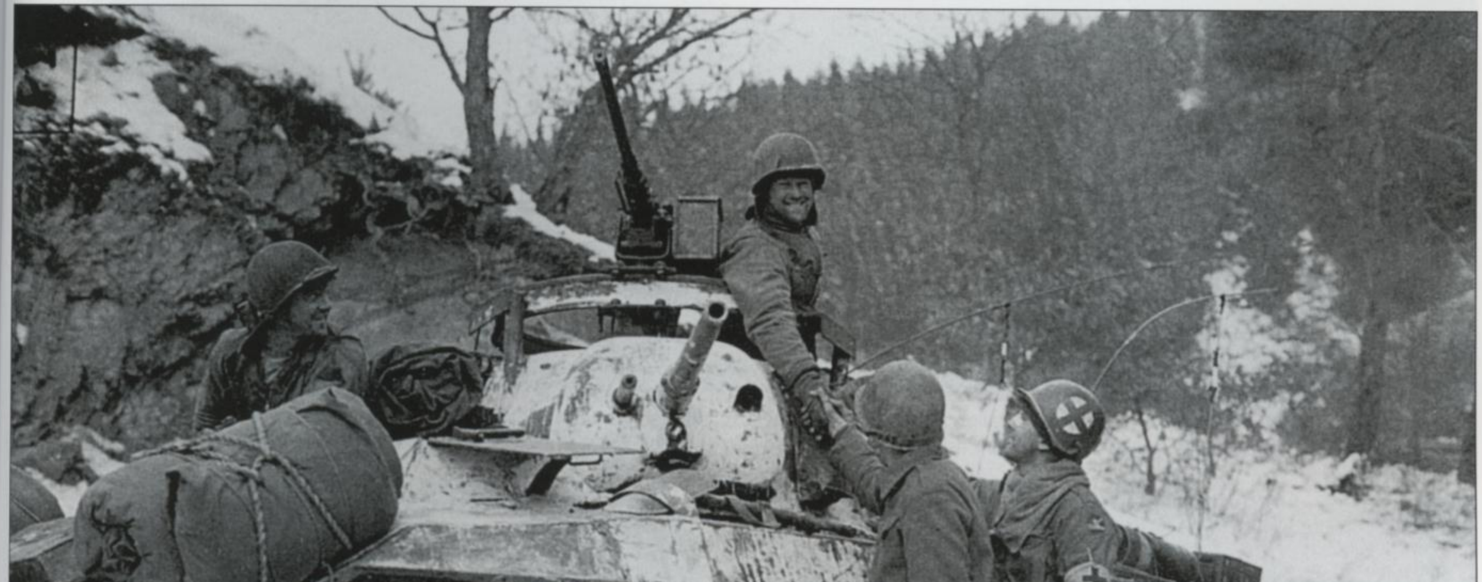
Paratroopers of the I&R platoon of the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 11th Armored Division bring in a couple of Wehrmacht prisoners during operations near Longchamps on 15 January 1945.



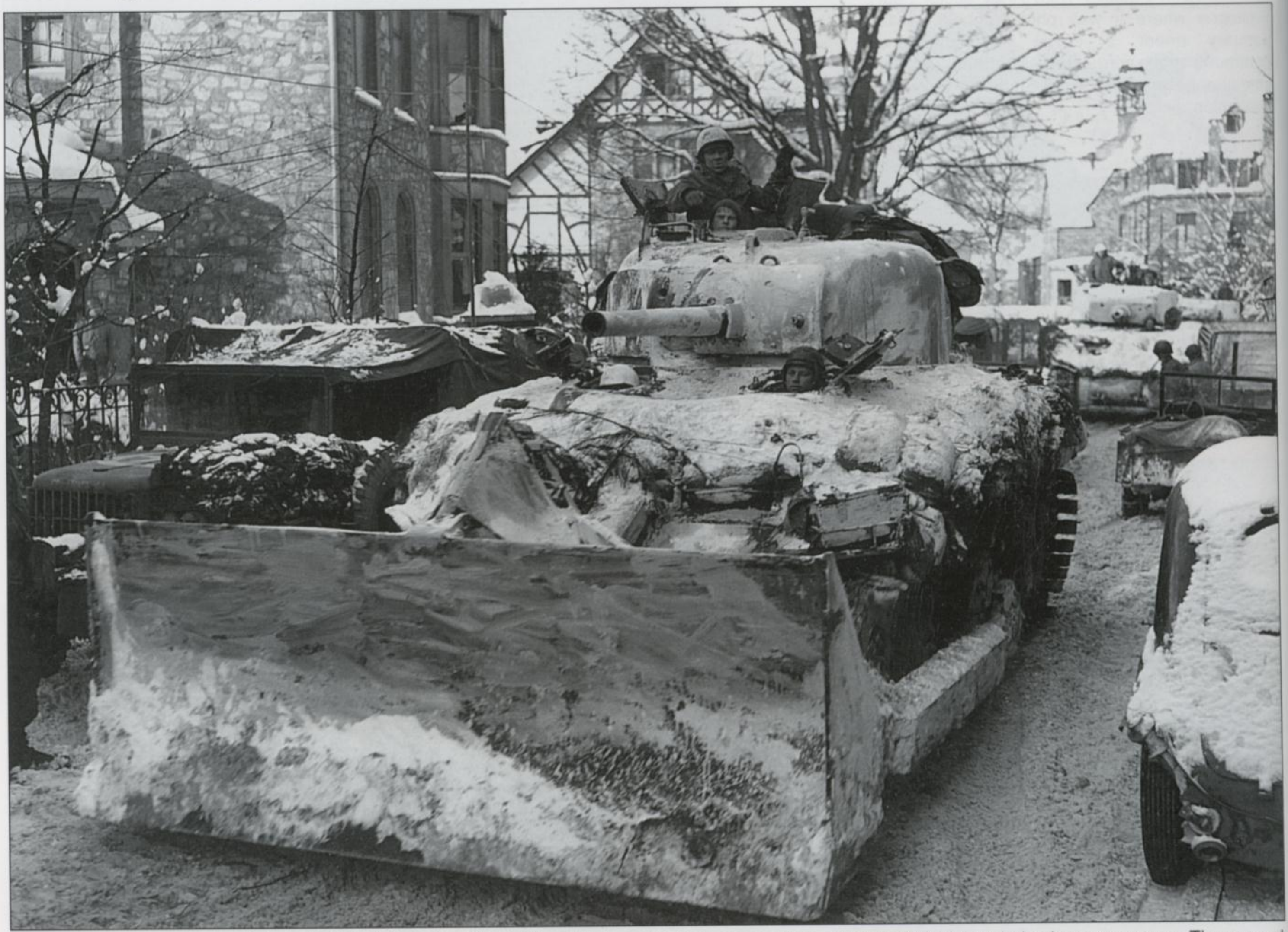
US infantry moves up north of Bastogne near Compogne, Belgium on 15 January past a disabled Flakpanzer IV Wirbelwind. This anti-aircraft version of the PzKpfw IV tank was armed with a four-barrel 20mm Flak 38 anti-aircraft cannon.

This Flakpanzer IV Wirbelwind was abandoned in Patton's Third Army sector near Bastogne where it was photographed on 23 January under a cover of snow and communication wire. It was earmarked for shipment back to the United States for technical evaluation.

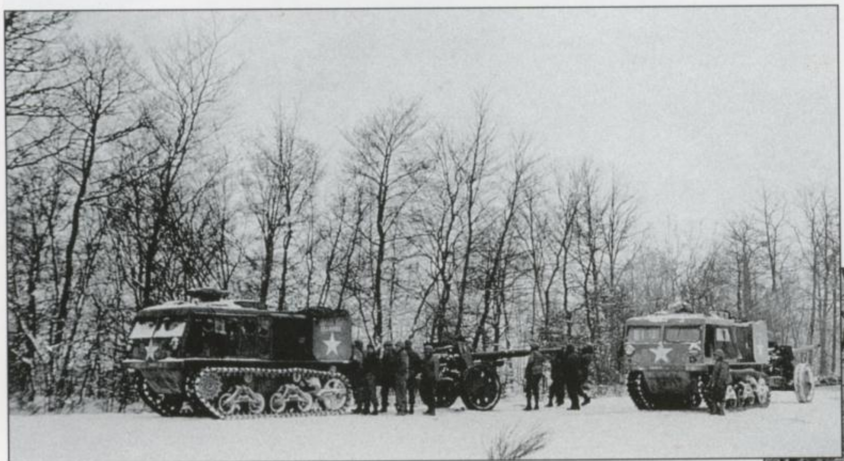




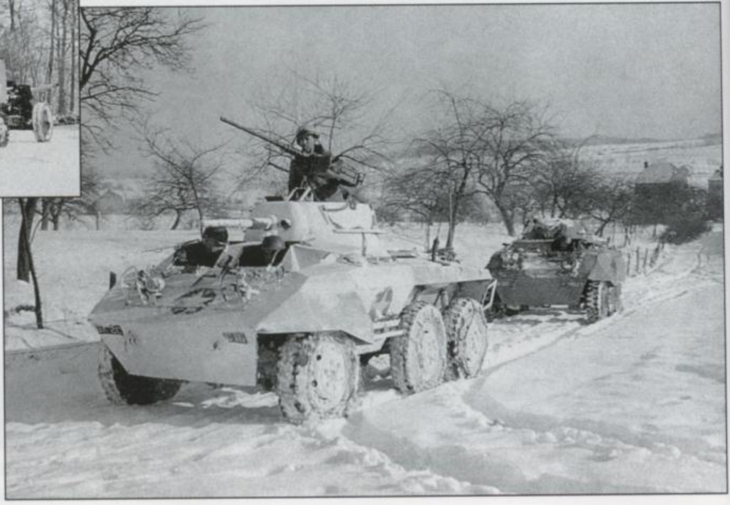
Patton's Third Army linked up with the First Army along the Ourthe River on 16 January 1945, with troops of the 84th Division shaking hands with a M8 armored car crew from the 11th Armored Division. This linked up both the eastern and western shoulders of the Bulge for the first time.



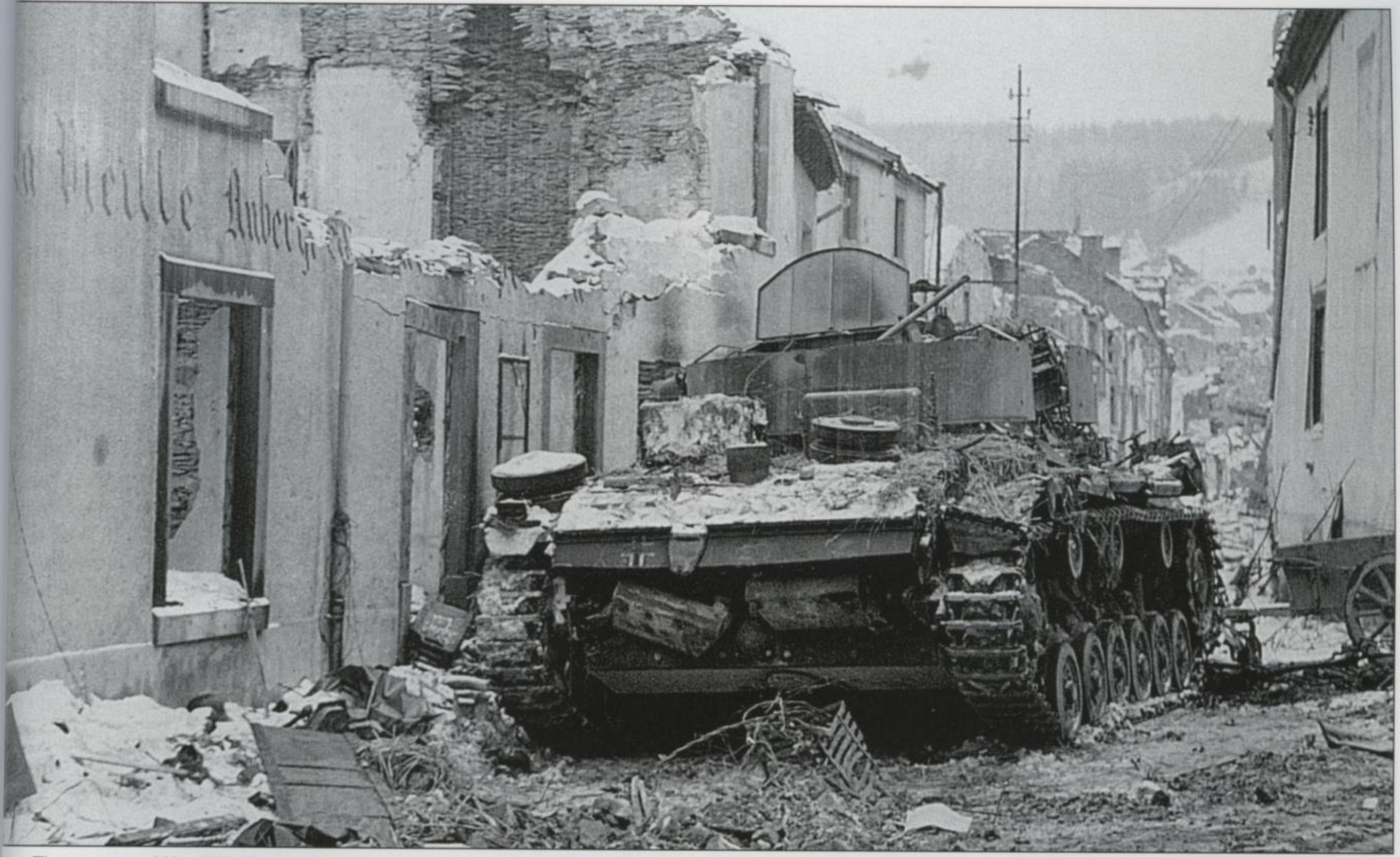
A M4A1 medium tank of the 743rd Tank Battalion fitted with a M1 dozer blade leads a column through Malmédy to help clear away snow. The second tank in the column is one of the rare M4A3E2 Jumbo assault tanks. At the time, this battalion was supporting the 38th Division in efforts to reduce the Bulge.



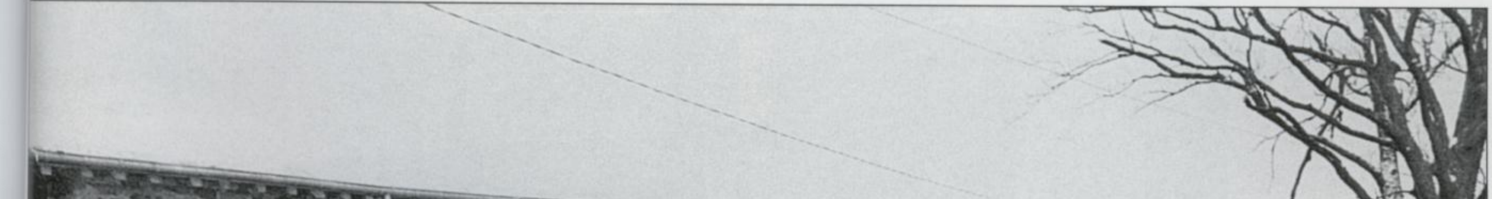
On occasion, captured German artillery was employed if ammunition was available. Here, a couple of M4 high speed tractors are towing a pair of German 88mm PaK 43/41 heavy anti-tank guns while supporting operations by the 90th Division in Luxembourg on 11 January 1945. These massive guns were appropriately nicknamed the *Scheunentor* (Barn door) by their German crews due to their massive size.



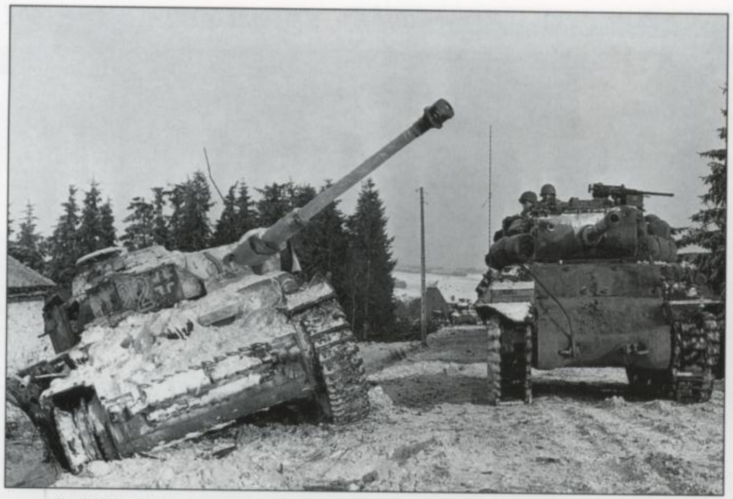
A pair of M8 armored cars move out on a scouting mission on 14 January 1945. They are part of C Troop, 2nd Cavalry Squadron which was supporting the 4th Infantry Division in the Bastogne area at the time. The lead vehicle has been whitewashed leaving the white Allied star in an olive drab circle.



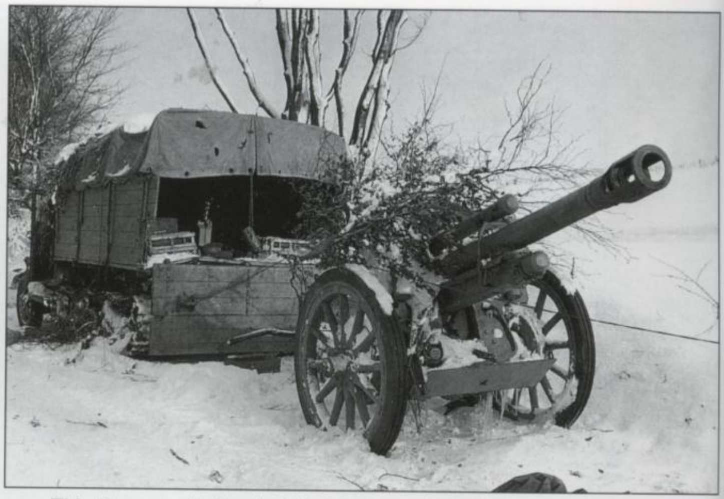
The streets of Houfallize were littered with abandoned equipment following the retreat of the 116.Panzer Division on 14 January 1945. One of the more unusual items was this old PzKpfw III. According to records, there were no PzKpfw III gun tanks in service at this time, so presumably, this one was being used as a command tank.



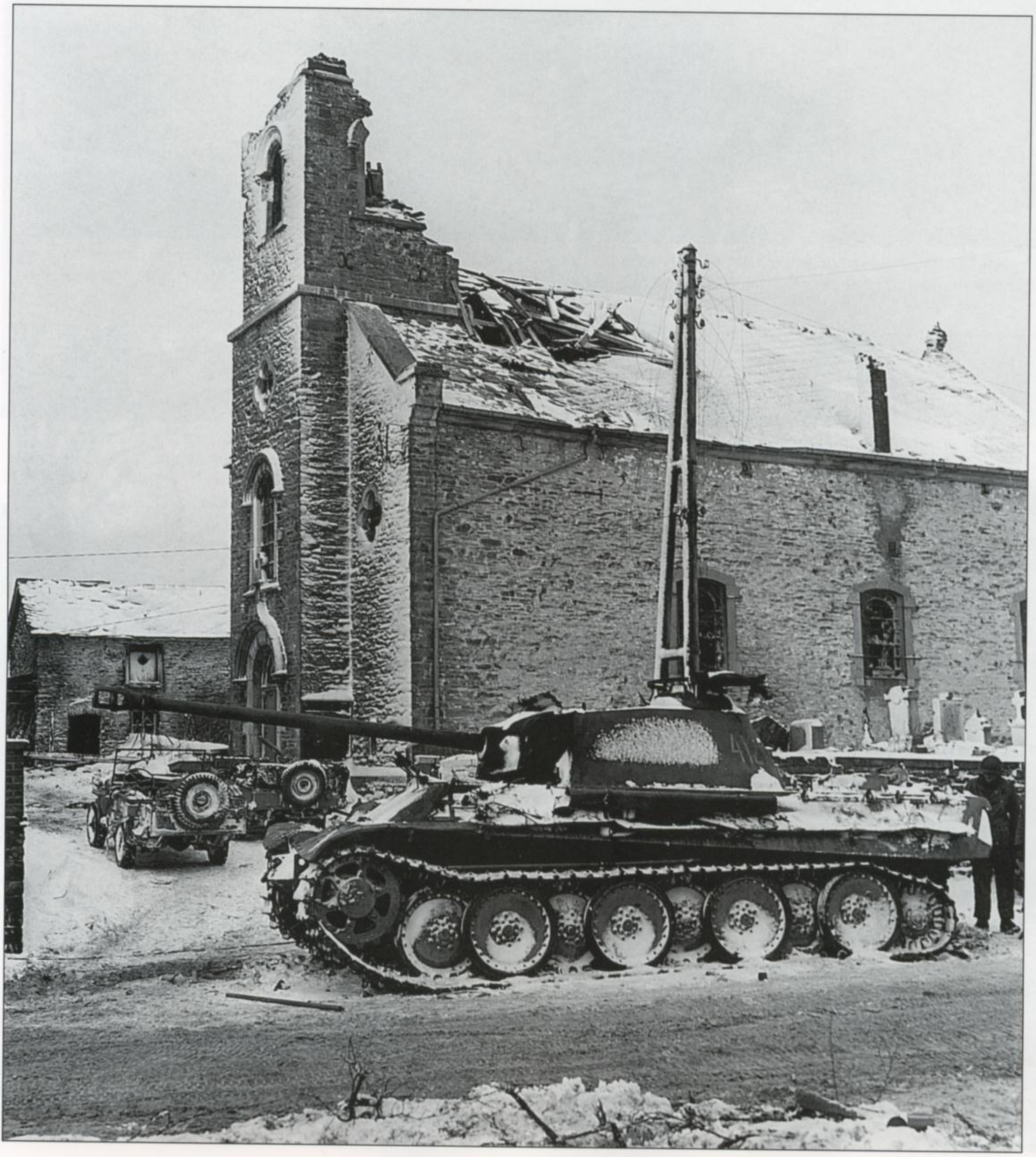
A Panther Ausf. G, tactical number 121 of the 9.Panzer Division, knocked out by a 57mm anti-tank gun during the fighting for Langlir, to the north-east of Houfallize, on 13 January 1945. Although the 57mm anti-tank gun was ineffective against the Panther's thick frontal armor, it could penetrate the side armor. Note the penetration in the turret side in the lower rear corner of the tactical number. The 9.Panzer Division typically painted its tactical numbers in plain white on the rear side of the turret.



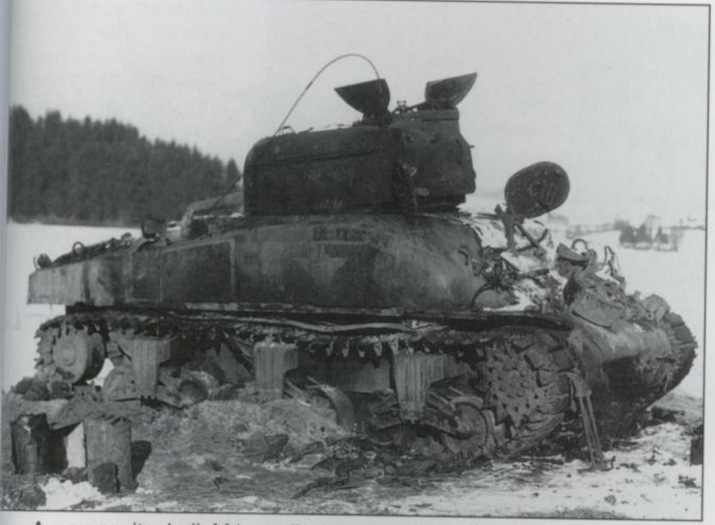
A M36 90mm gun motor carriage of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, 3rd Armored Division passes by a derelict PzKpfw IV of Pz.Abt. 115, 15.Panzergrenadier Division south of Langlir on 13 January 1945.



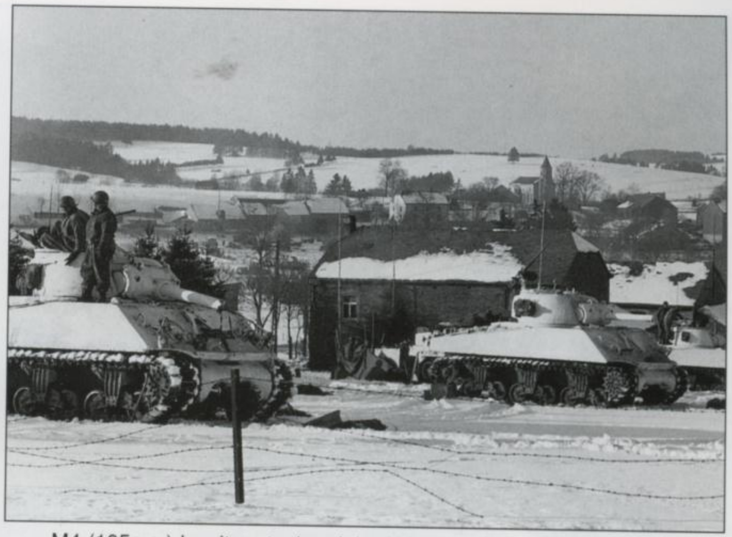
This German 10.5cm leFH 18 howitzer, being towed by a Maultier half-track truck, was abandoned near Wardin to the south east of Bastogne during the January retreat. This was the standard divisional field gun of the German Army during the war.



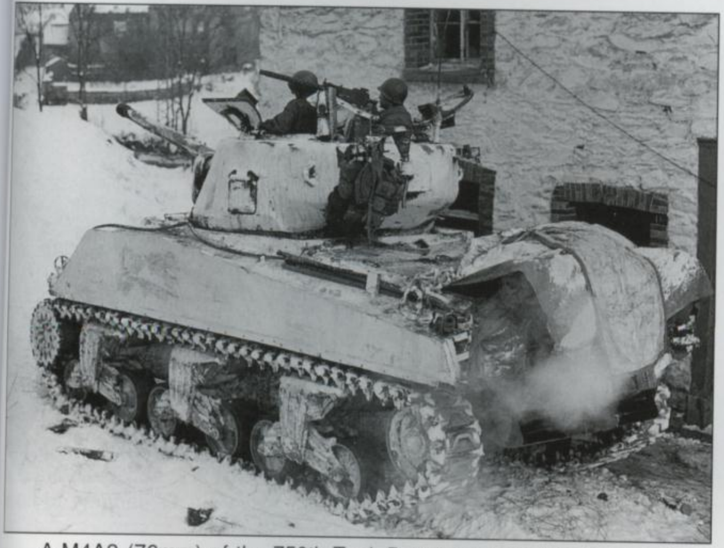
A Panther Ausf. G tank, tactical number 412, from the 9.Panzer Division, knocked out near the village church in Sterpigny, Belgium. This village is to the south of Langlir, the site of the other Panther photo here. This tank took part in attempts by the 9.Panzer Division to rebuff the advance of the US 3rd Armored Division on 17 January 1945 to the north-east of Houffalize. It was knocked out by a trio of tank destroyers of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion which pumped three rounds into the rear engine compartment.



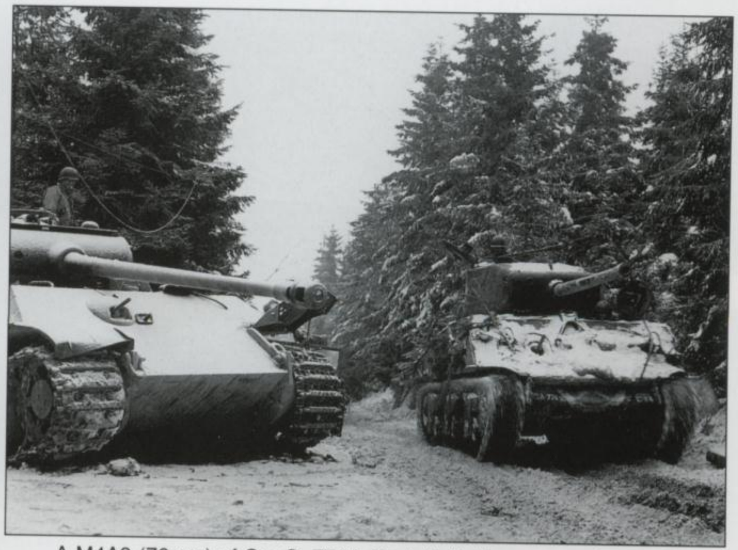
A composite hull M4 medium tank of the 69th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division, knocked out during the fighting around Wardin. This may have been one of the tanks knocked out in an unexpected encounter with a King Tiger on 11 January.



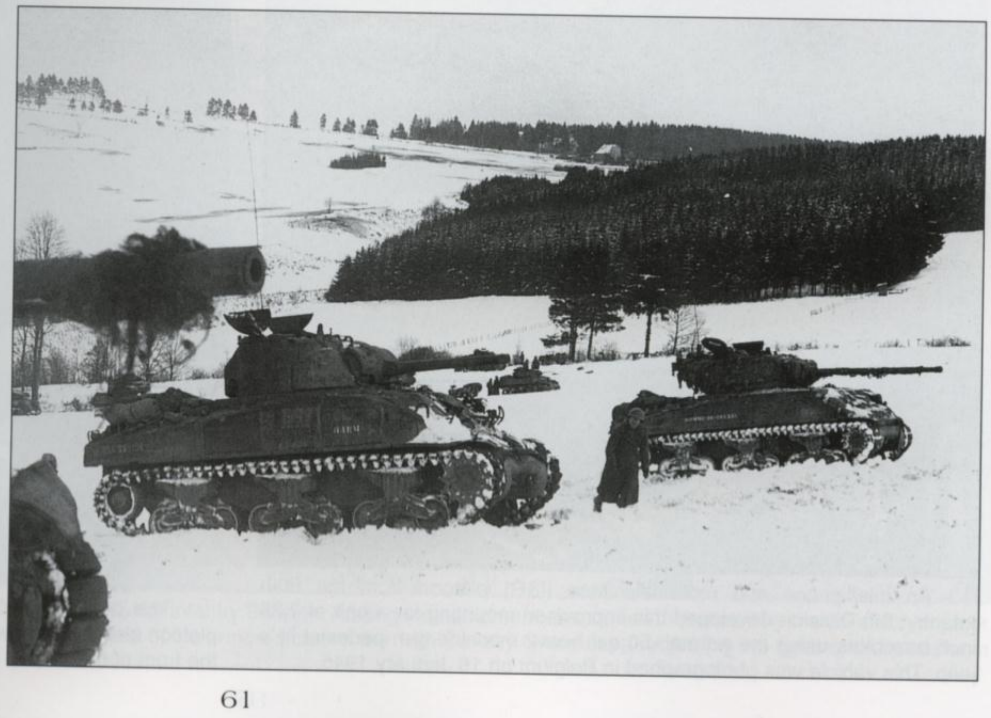
M4 (105mm) howitzer tanks of the HQ Co. of the 774th Tank Battalion provide fire support for the 75th Infantry Division on 16 January 1945.



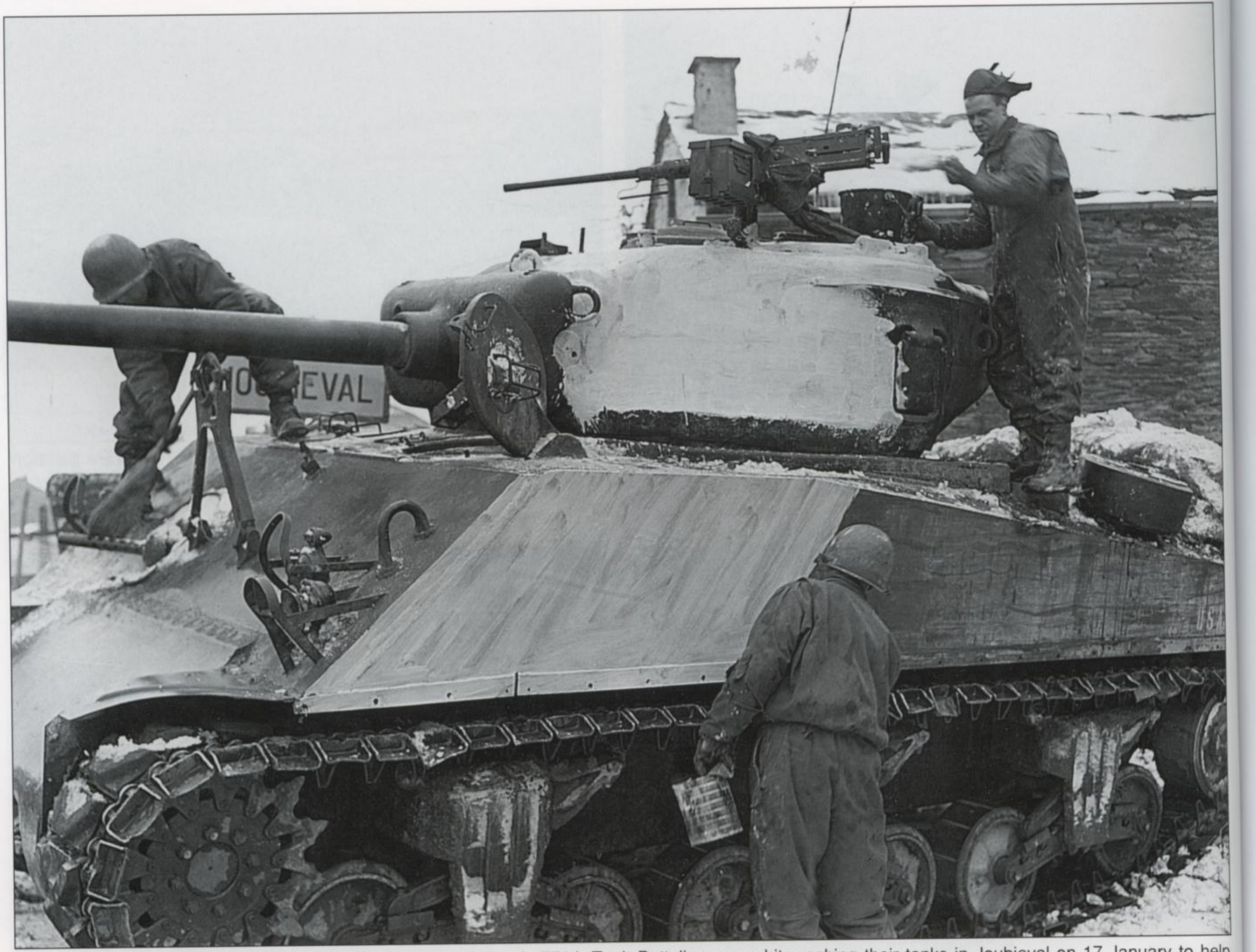
A M4A3 (76mm) of the 750th Tank Battalion moves into Salmchateau in support of the 75th Division on 16 January 1945. The tank has been thoroughly whitewashed, and on the back deck is a long fluorescent orange air identity panel to prevent strafing by Allied aircraft.



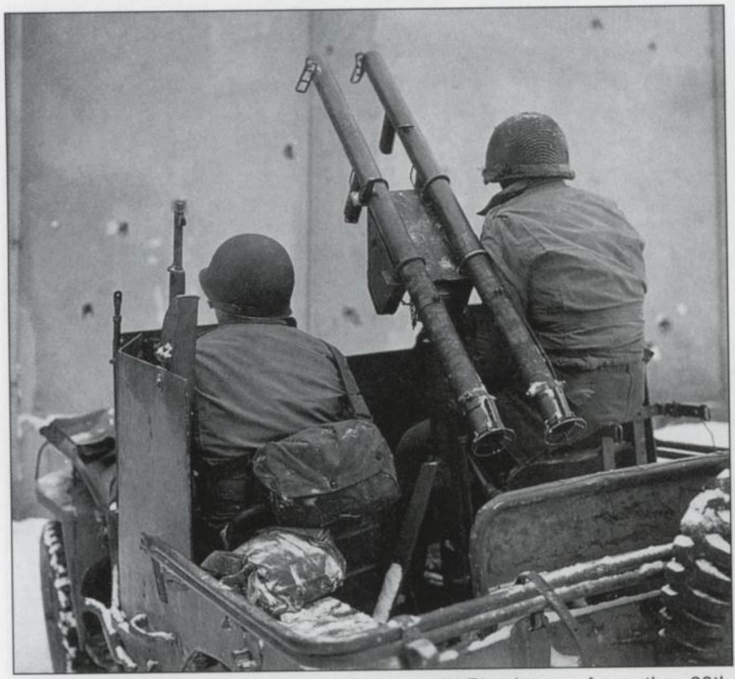
A M4A3 (76mm) of Co. C, 774th Tank Battalion, passes by a disabled Panther tank in the forest near Bovigny on 17 January 1945 while supporting the 83rd Division during the drive to seal the Bulge.



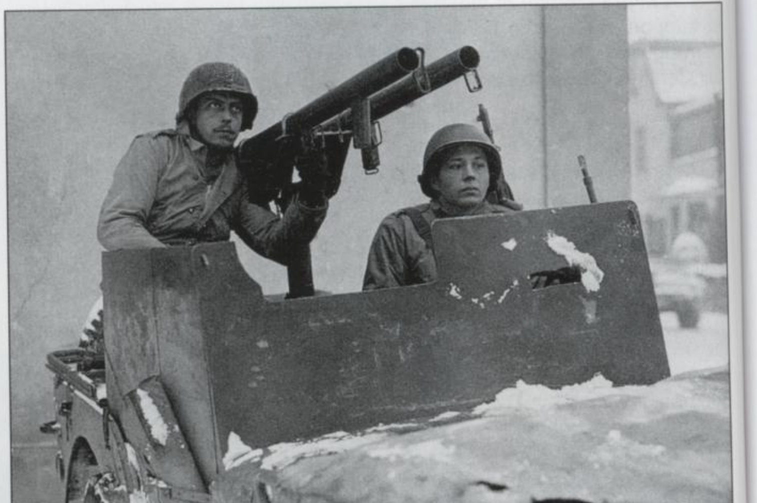
Tanks of H/66th Armored Regiment, 2nd Armored Division move forward prior to the operations from Houfallize on 16 January 1944. The composite hull M4 nearer the camera is named "Harm" while the M4A3 (76mm) is named "Homme de Guerre" (Man of War).



While Co. C was moving through the Bovigny forest, Co. A, 774th Tank Battalion was whitewashing their tanks in Joubieval on 17 January to help camouflage them in the snow.

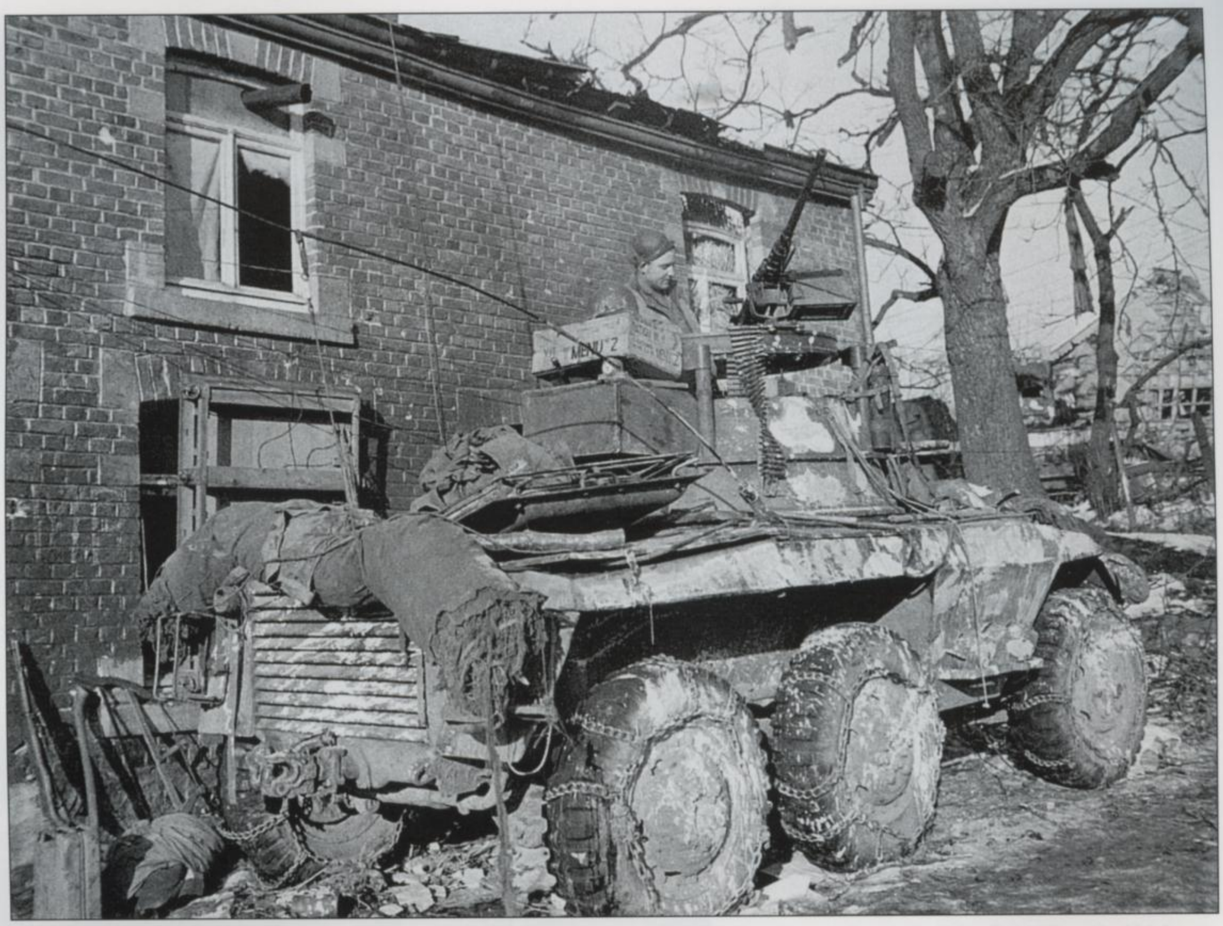


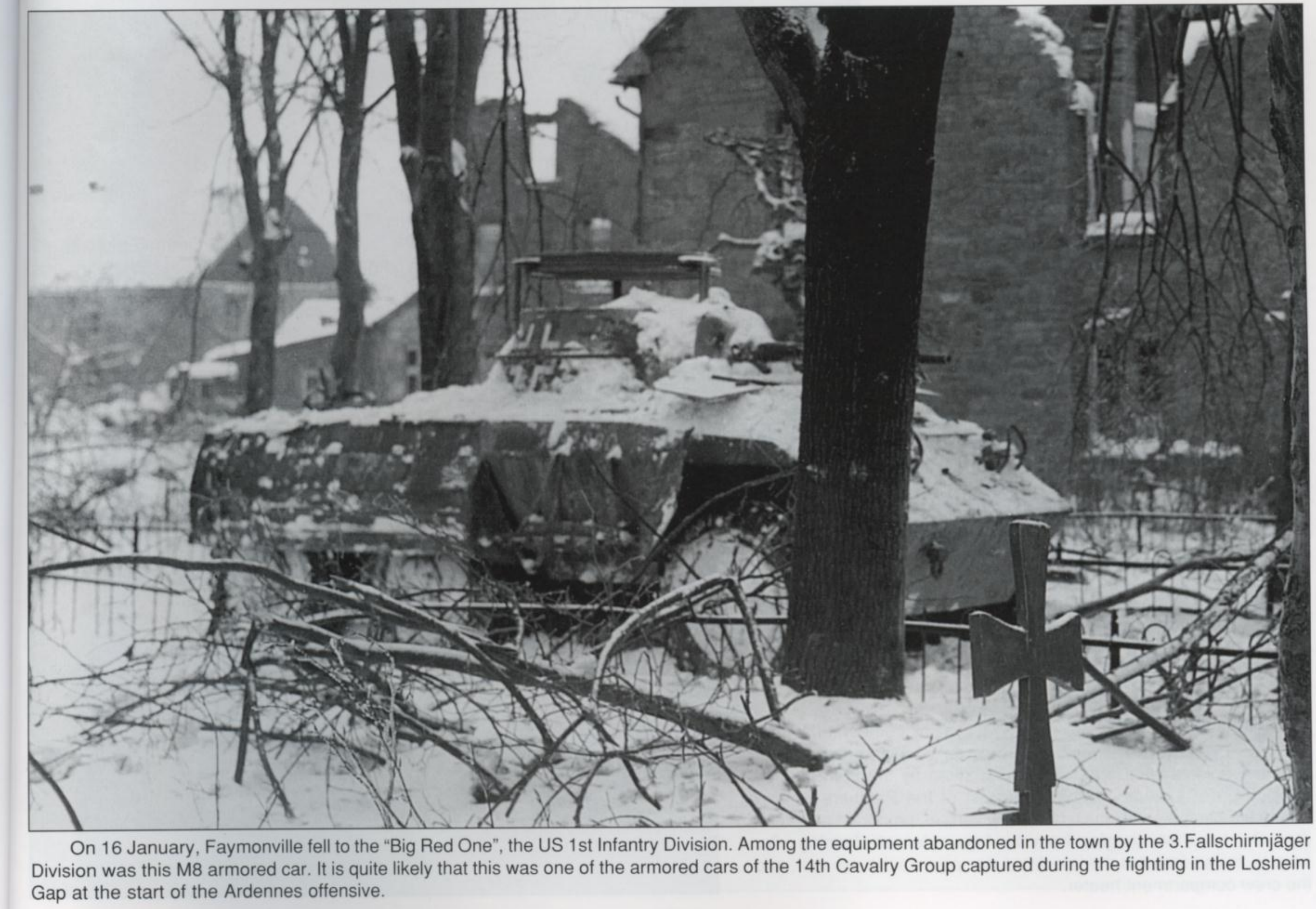
An intelligence and reconnaissance (I&R) platoon from the 60th Infantry, 9th Division developed this improvised mounting for a pair of 2.35 inch bazookas using the normal .50 cal heavy machine gun pedestal in a jeep. This vehicle was photographed in Belgium on 16 January 1945.



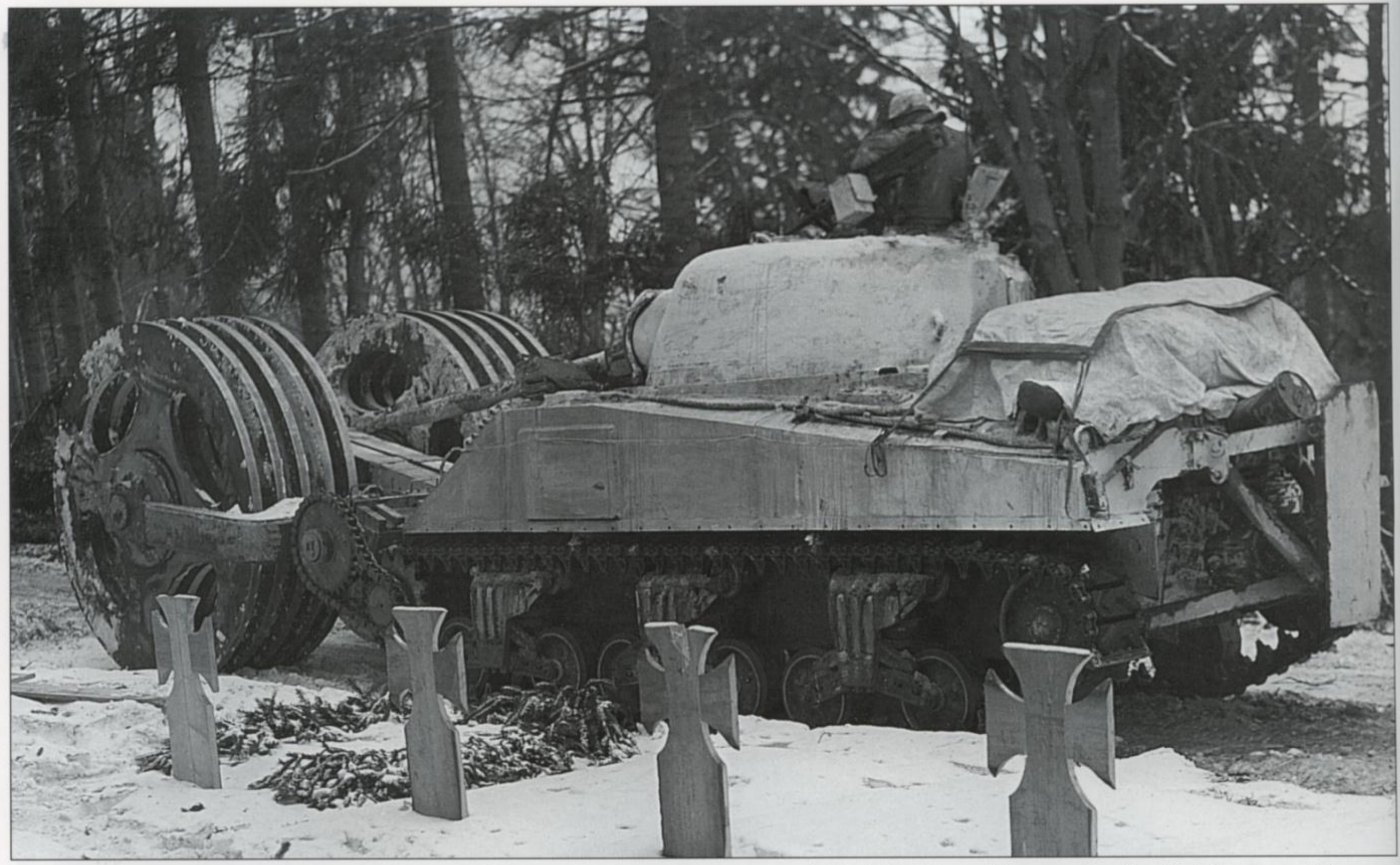
This other view of the bazooka armed jeep from a 60th Infantry I&R platoon also shows how the crew has added a partial armored shield around the front of the vehicle from plate steel.

A M8 armored car of the 4th Cavalry Squadron, 4th Cavalry Group, in Borzee, Germany towards the end of the campaign on 16 January 1945. This cavalry unit had been attached to the 2nd Armored Division for much of the fighting in Belgium, and the 4th Squadron was often used to screen between CCA and CCB. This M8 shows the wear and tear of combat, missing its side skirts, and festooned with crew gear. It has been given a hasty camouflage of whitewash and is fitted with tire chains to help negotiate the muddy and icy roads.

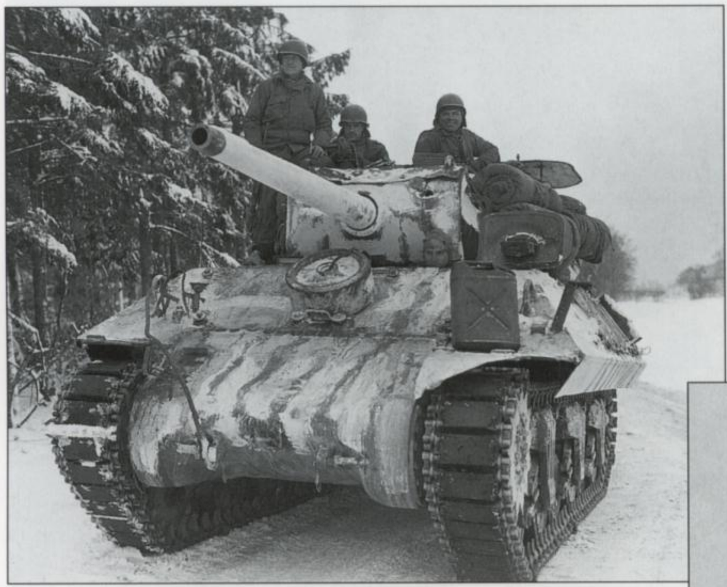




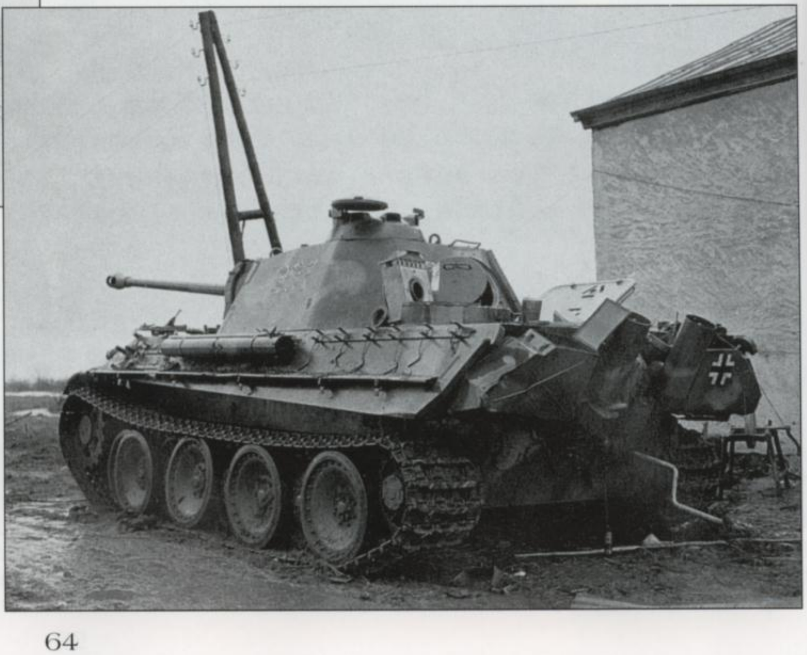
On 16 January, Faymonville fell to the "Big Red One", the US 1st Infantry Division. Among the equipment abandoned in the town by the 3.Fallschirmjäger Division was this M8 armored car. It is quite likely that this was one of the armored cars of the 14th Cavalry Group captured during the fighting in the Losheim Gap at the start of the Ardennes offensive.



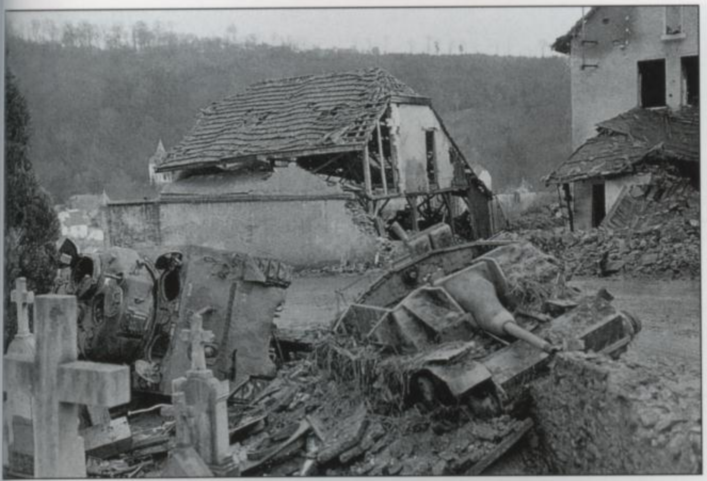
A M4 of the 738th Tank Battalion fitted with a T1E3 mine roller passes by a cemetery in Recht, Belgium while supporting the US 1st Army on 18 January 1945. The device at the rear of the tank is a pusher plate which enabled a second tank to give the mine-roller tank a helpful nudge if it got stuck.



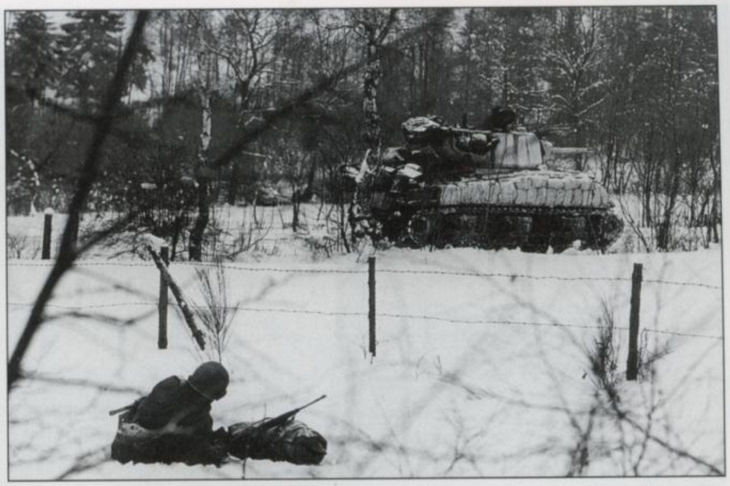
The 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was one of the most successful units of its type and was credited with destroying 103 German tanks by the end of the Ardennes campaign. The crew of this M10 seen near Benonchamps on 21 January was credited with five German tanks which were knocked out during a German counter-attack near Oberwampach during the fighting near Bastogne.



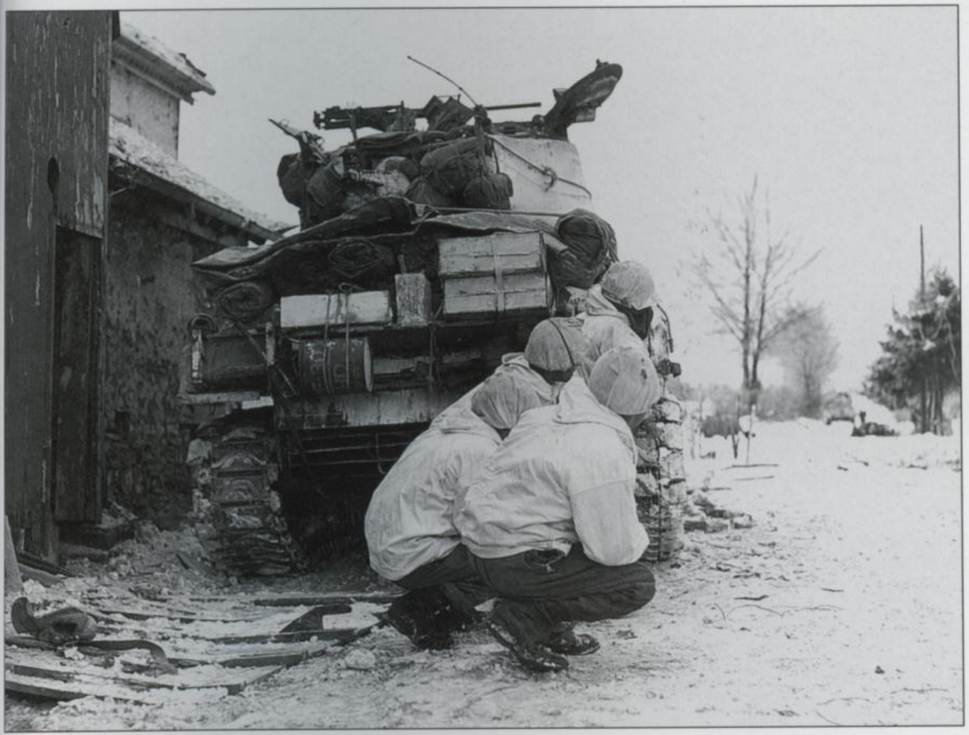
A Panther Ausf. G tank with the tactical number 301 from 2.Panzer Division abandoned near Clervaux, Luxembourg due to engine problems when the town was retaken by the 26th Infantry Division on 25 January 1945. Like most of the Panthers serving during the campaign, this is a fairly new vehicle, produced no earlier than October 1944 judging from the late style self-cleaning idler wheels. It also features the late flame dampers on the exhaust, and the crew compartment heater.



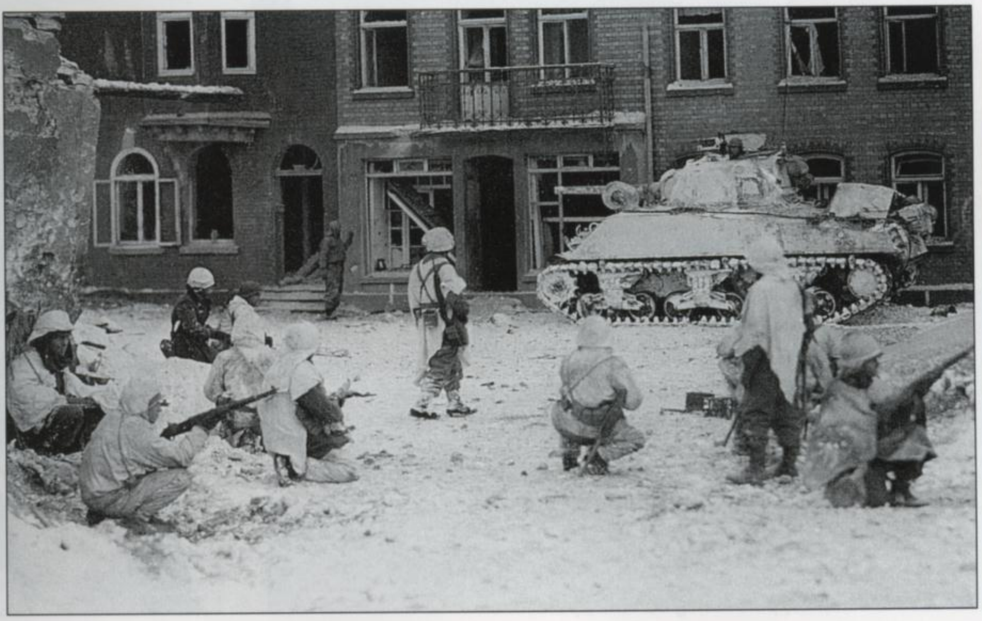
The debris of war still litters the streets of Clervaux, Luxembourg in February after the end of the battle. A StuG III from the 2.Panzer Division has been pushed off the road, as has a M4A3 (76mm) of the 707th Tank Battalion behind it.



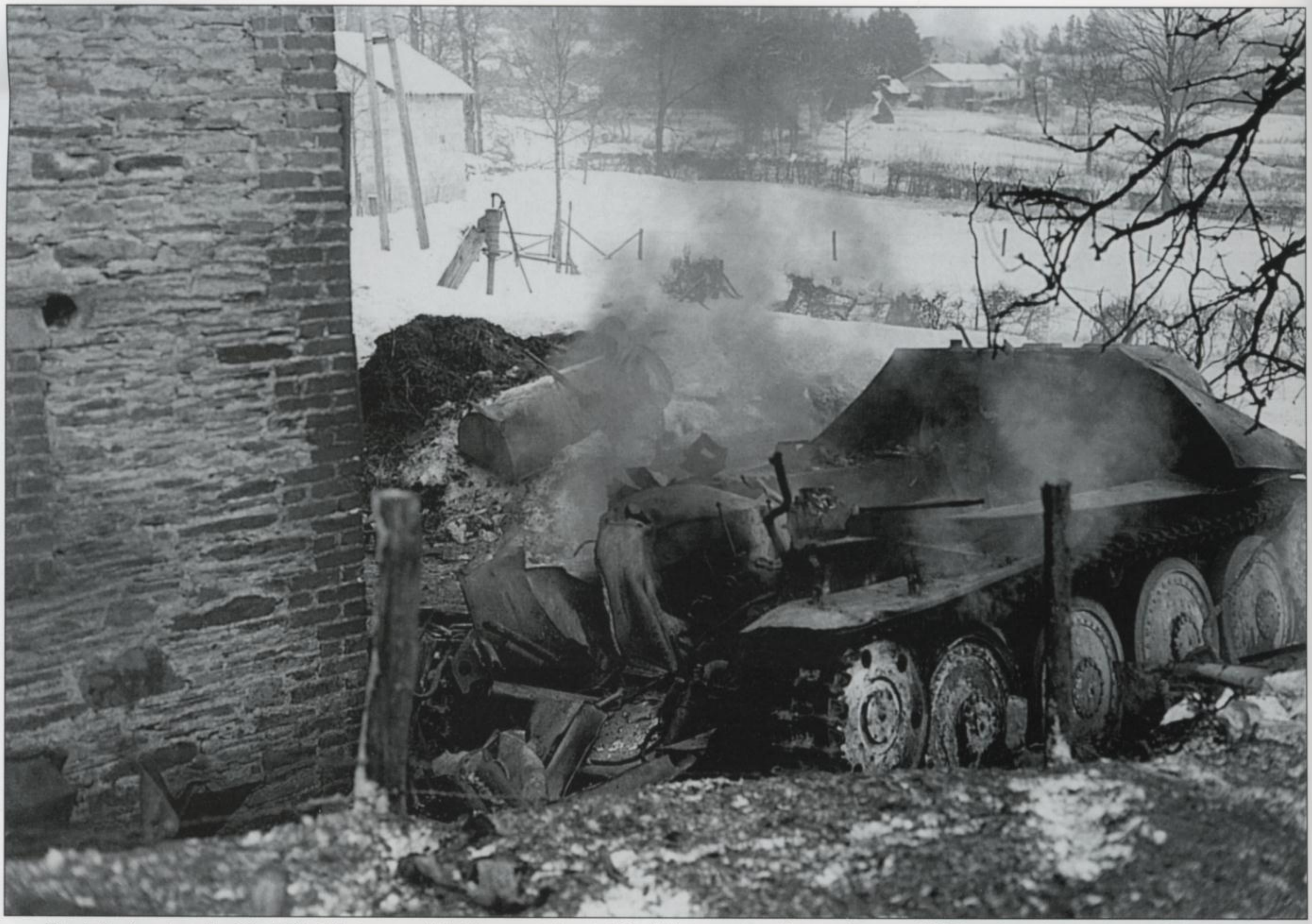
The 117th Infantry, 30th Division moved across the Ambleve along the Pont-Recht road on 17 January during the attack towards St. Vith. The 2/117th Infantry was supported by this M4A3E2 Jumbo assault tank, protected by sandbags along its side as well as its added armor.



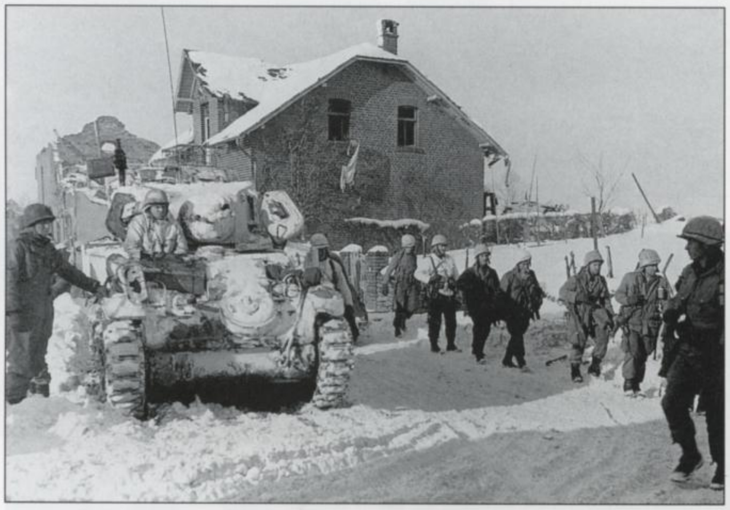
A M4A3 (76mm) tank of the 7th Armored Division supports the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion during the capture of the town of Hunnage on the way to St. Vith on 23 January 1945.



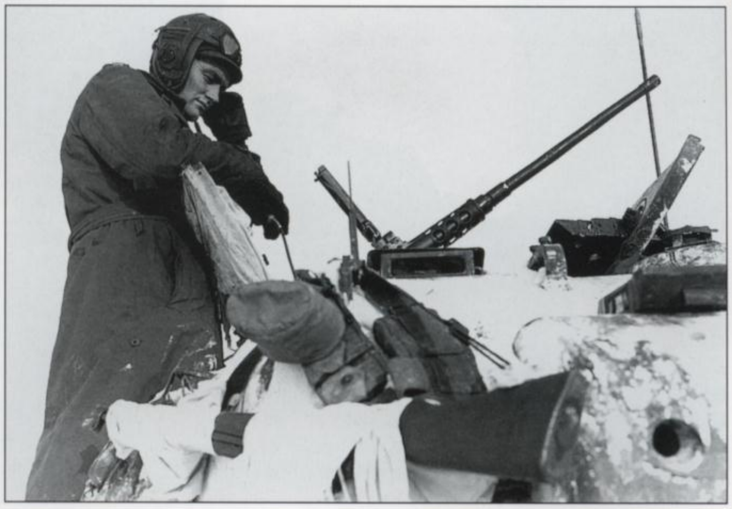
The 7th Armored Division, which had fought so hard for St. Vith in December, finally recaptured the battered city in January. Here, infantry of Company C, 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion take a breather in the city on 23 January 1945 before moving to the front. By this stage, the tanks of the division are whitewashed and the armored infantry have snow-suits.



The following day, the 23rd AIB, 7th Armored Division moved out of St. Vith to capture the small town of Wallerode to the north east. This Jagdpanzer 38 (t) Hetzer was knocked out during the fighting. The Hetzer was widely used in Volksgrenadier divisions in lieu of the StuG III, but its thin side armor made it vulnerable as is so evident here. The combat photographer who photographed this scene was killed moments later during the fighting in Wallerode.

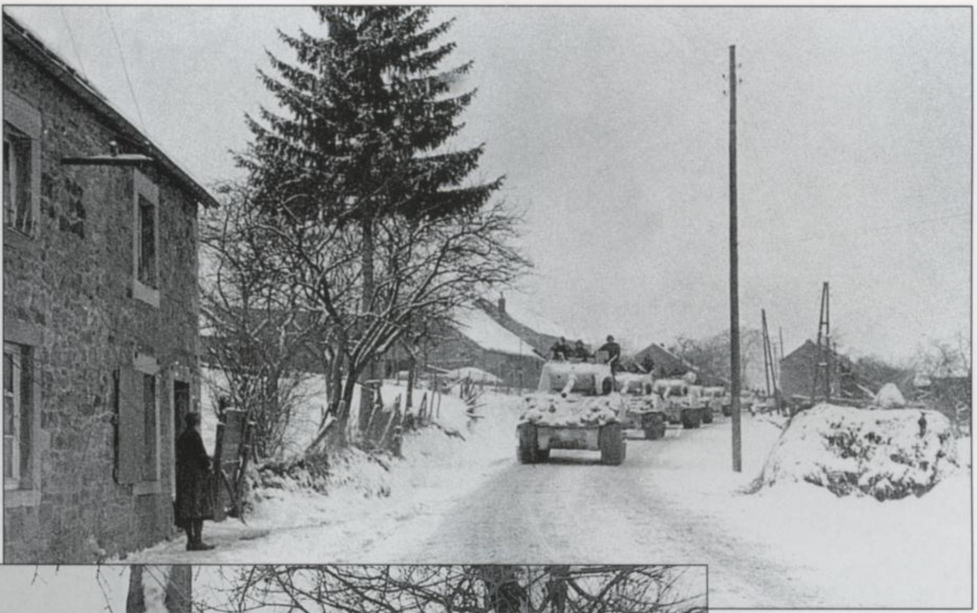


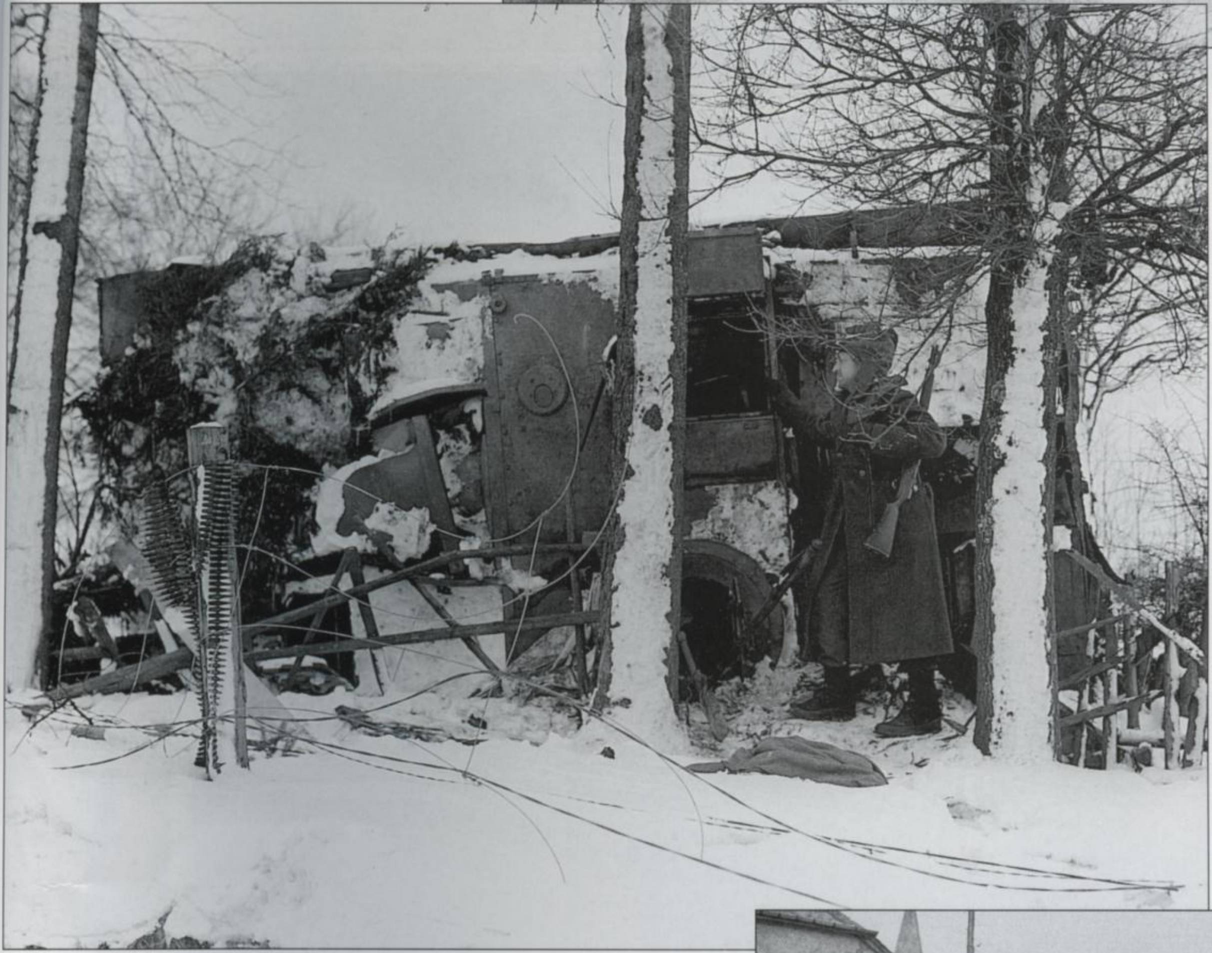
A M5A1 from the 7th Armored Division provides support for a column of infantry from the 509th Parachute Infantry near St. Vith on 24 Janaury 1945.



Lt. O. Odens, a field artillery forward observer, stands outside his M4 medium tank while talking over the radio with other units from the 7th Armored Division during operations near St. Vith on 25 January 1945. The forward observers were assigned to forward tank units to help provide accurate artillery support during combat operations.

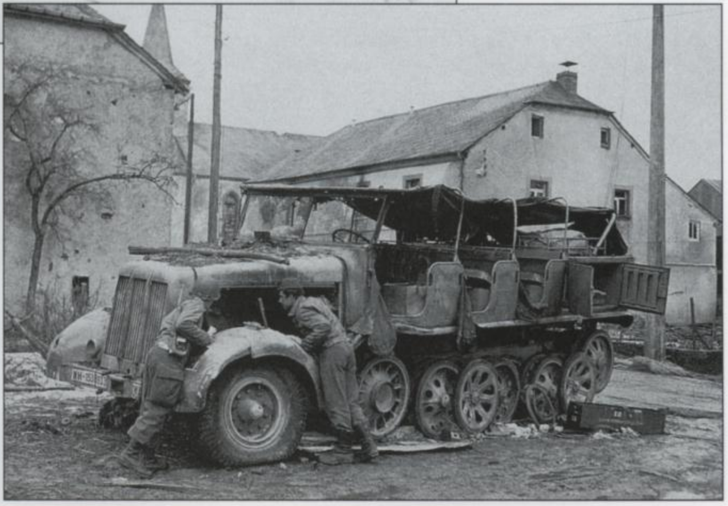
By the end of January, the Belgian countryside was deep in snow. Here a 2nd Armored Division column of white-washed tanks led by a sand-bagged M4 (76mm) tanks moves through Eisenne, Belgium on the way to the front on 21 January 1945.

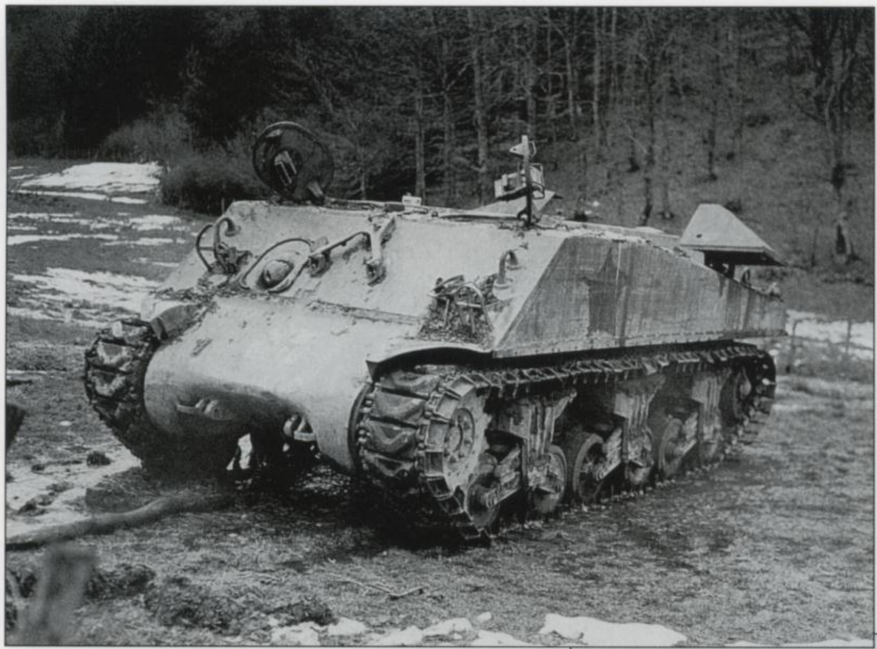




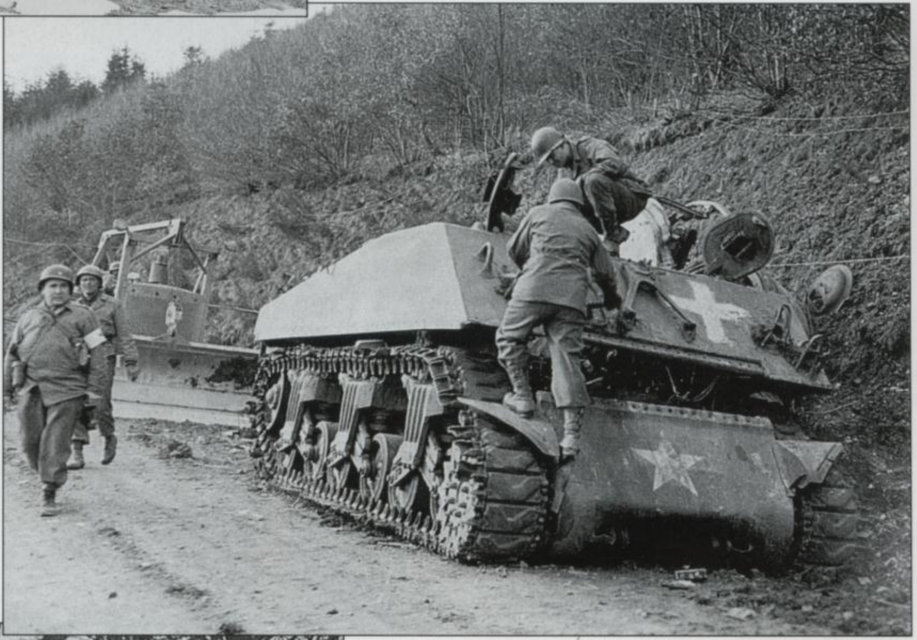
On 24 January, artillery supporting a 1st Infantry Division attack on Ambleve, Belgium knocked this StuG IV assault gun on its side. This was a less common version of the assault gun, based on the PzKpfw IV chassis instead of the PzKpfw III chassis.

A Daimler-Benz DB 10 12-ton Zugkraftwagen of 2.Panzer Division lies disabled in the streets of Marnach, Luxembourg following the recapture of the town by the 26th Infantry Division on 25 January 1945. This vehicle was used in panzer divisions to tow heavy artillery.

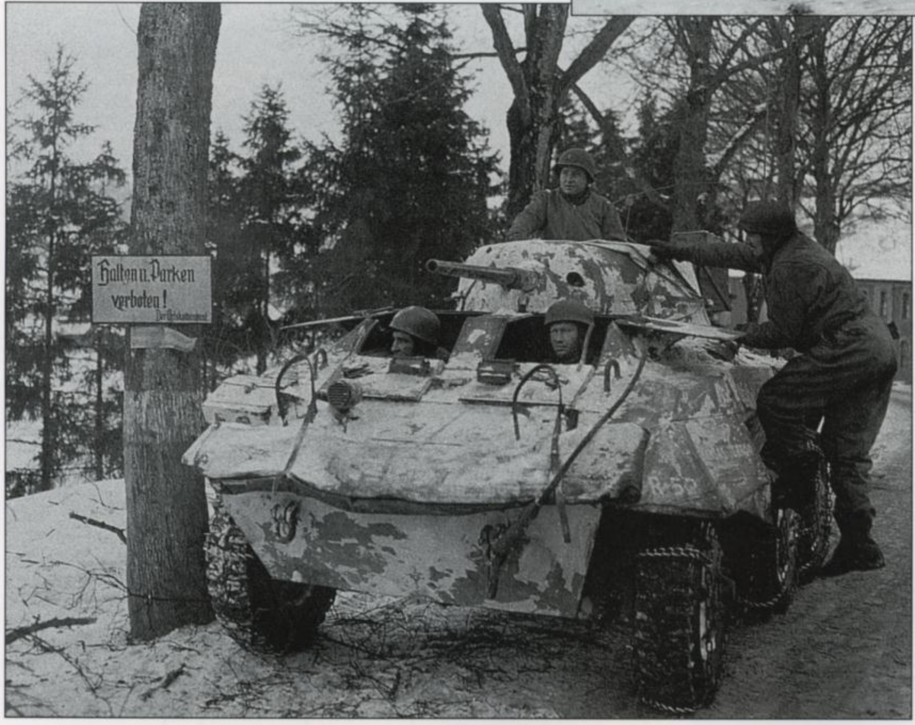




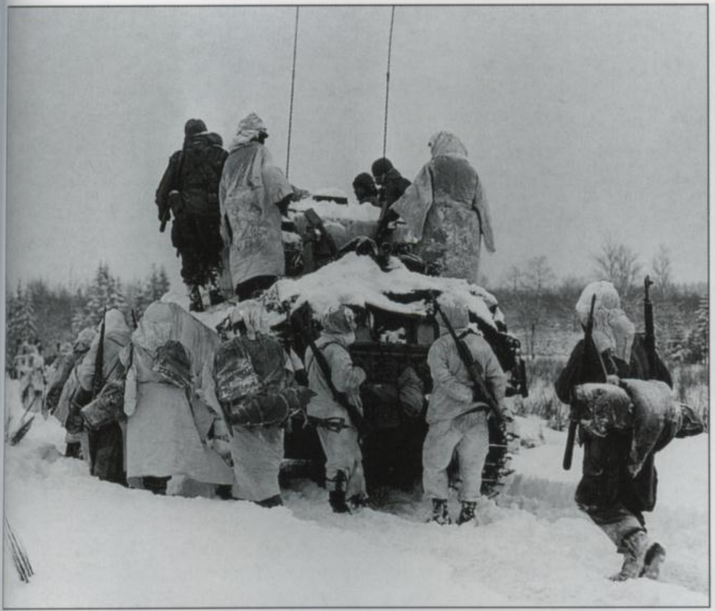
German units made use of captured equipment when possible, especially the German Seventh Army which was short of tanks. This M4A3 medium tank was knocked out by the 10th Armored Division at the end of January 1945 during the fighting in Luxembourg, losing its turret. The US white stars on the side had been painted out, and barely evident on the bow is a German cross.



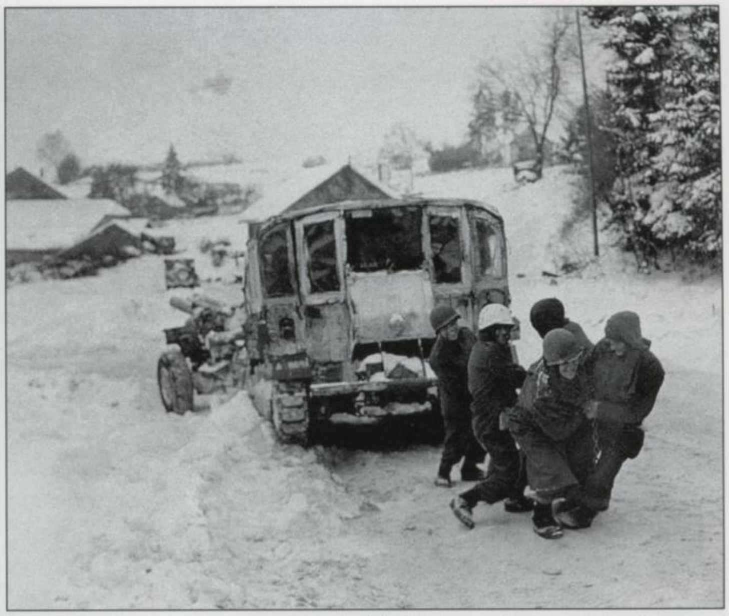
Another example of a captured M4A3 medium tank in use by German Seventh Army troops in the Ardennes, this time near Dasburg, the crossing point between Luxembourg and Germany. This particular one was knocked out by an air strike in February 1945, losing its turret to an internal ammunition explosion. It was later recovered by the 6th Armored Division.



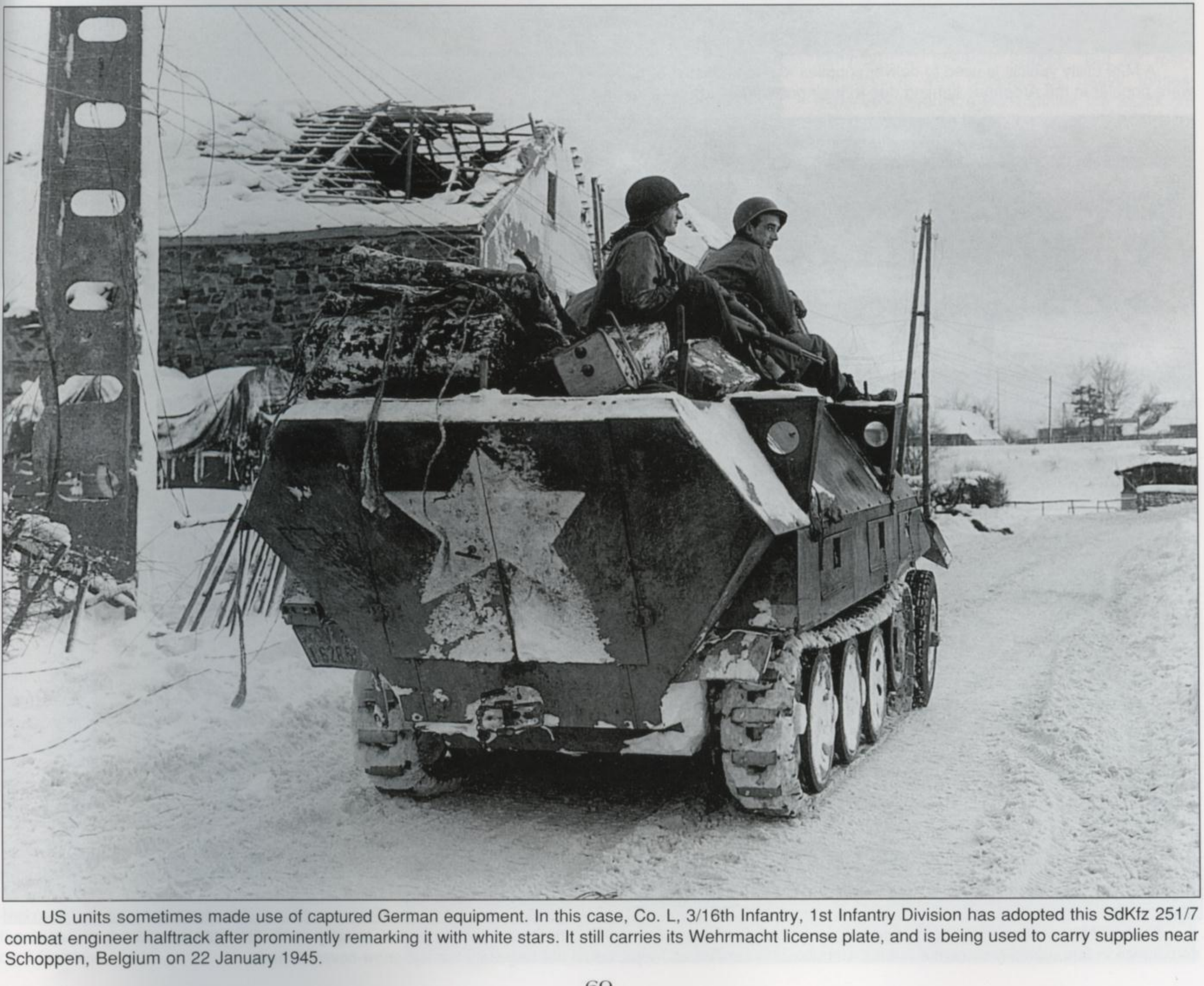
A M8 armored car of an unidentified unit near the German frontier on 26 January 1945. The sign on the road side in German forbids halting and parking, a regulation intended to minimize the threat of Allied air attack. Three of the crew here wear British armored crewmen helmets.



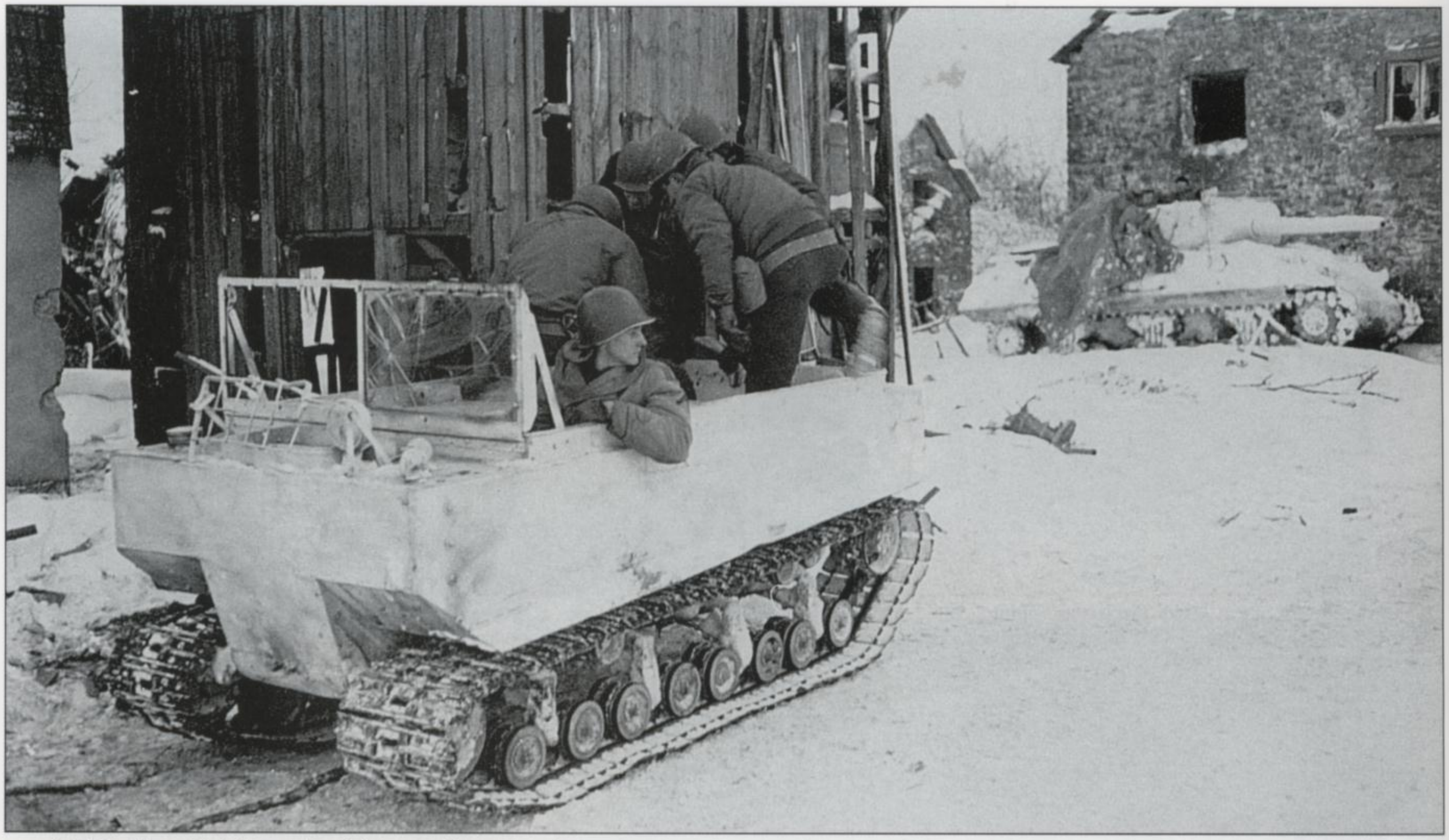
Paratroopers of the 504th Parachute Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division get a ride aboard a M4A3 (76mm) during operations near Herresbach, Belgium on 28 January 1945.



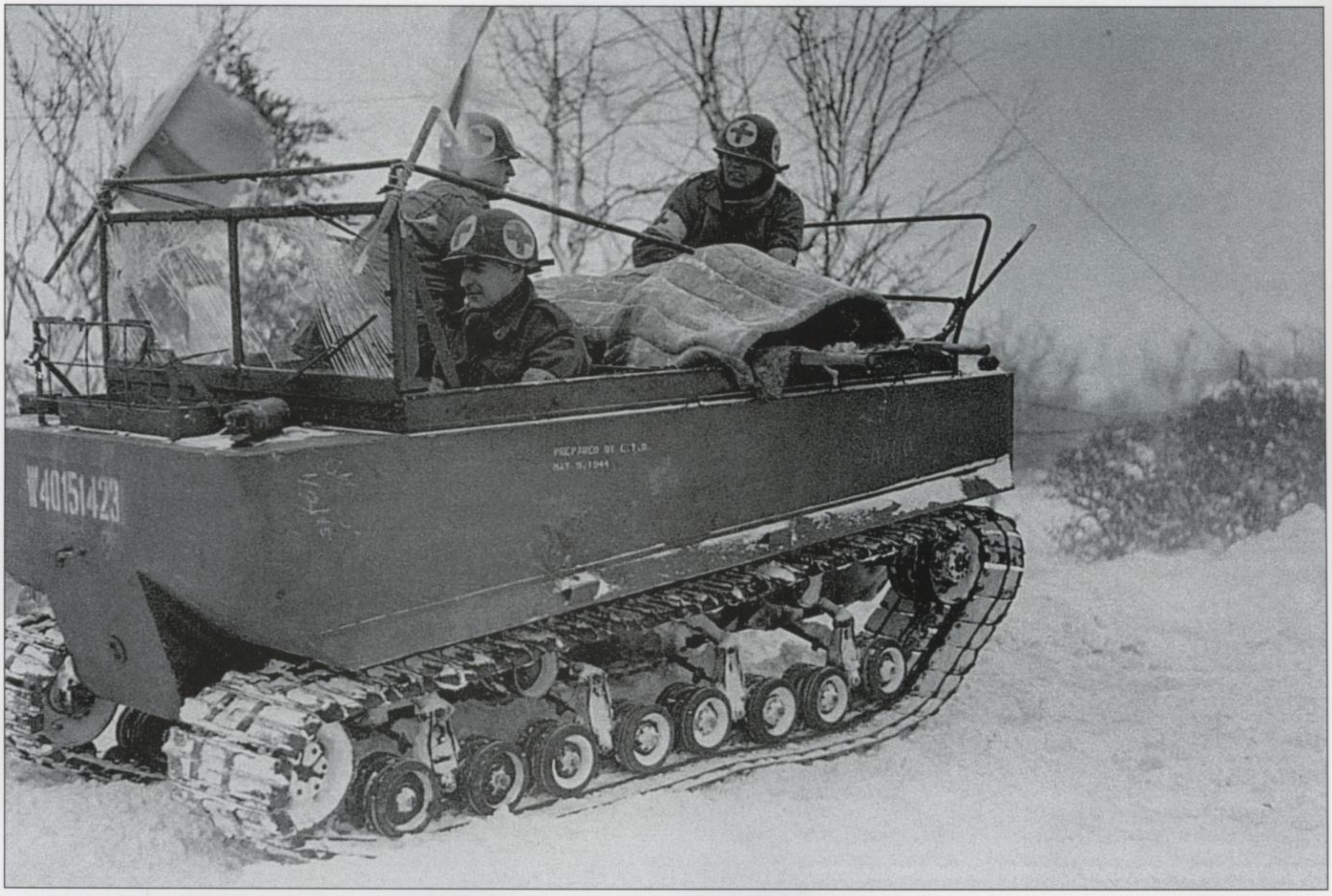
Sometimes even the most powerful vehicle needs a good tug. The crew of this M4 high speed tractor towing a 155mm howitzer is extending the tow cable from the front winch to an unseen vehicle in the foreground to help extract it from a deep patch of snow or ice. This vehicle belonged to the 809th Field Artillery Battalion and is seen near Nederscheid, Belgium on 30 January 1945.



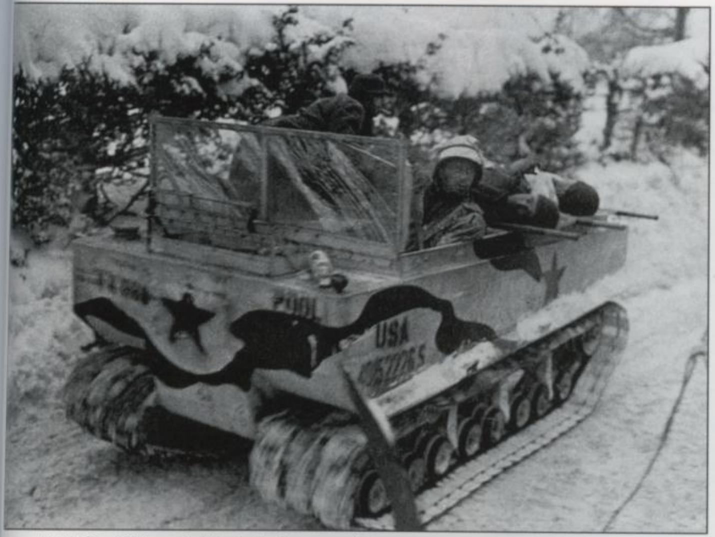
US units sometimes made use of captured German equipment. In this case, Co. L, 3/16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division has adopted this SdKfz 251/7 combat engineer halftrack after prominently remarking it with white stars. It still carries its Wehrmacht license plate, and is being used to carry supplies near Schoppen, Belgium on 22 January 1945.

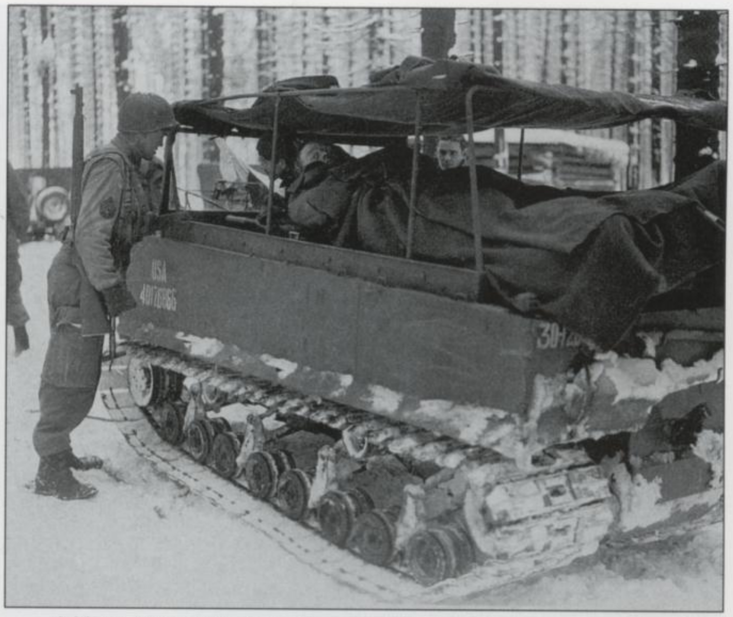


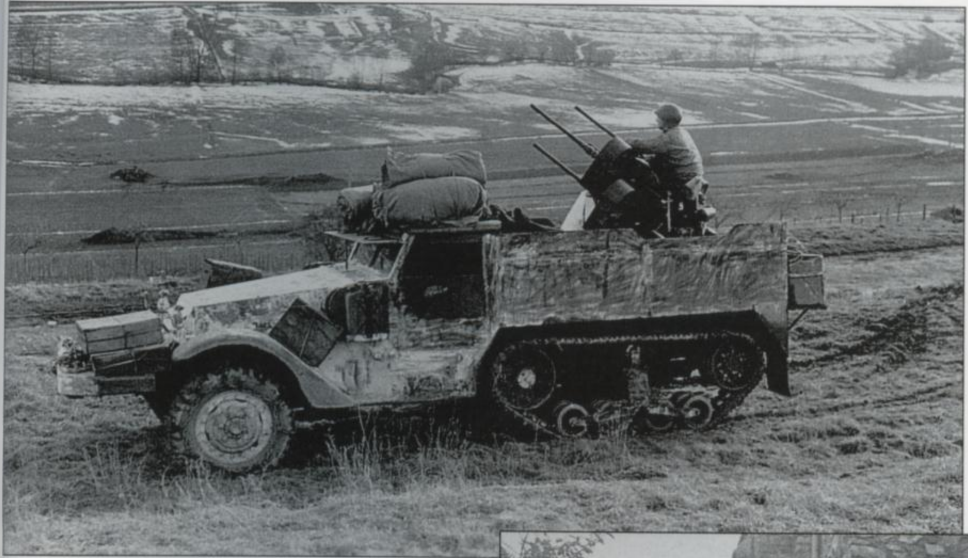
A M29 utility vehicle is used to deliver supplies to a tank destroyer battalion near Schoppen, Belgium on 23 January 1945. These small tracked carriers were popular in the Ardennes fighting due to their good floatation on snow.

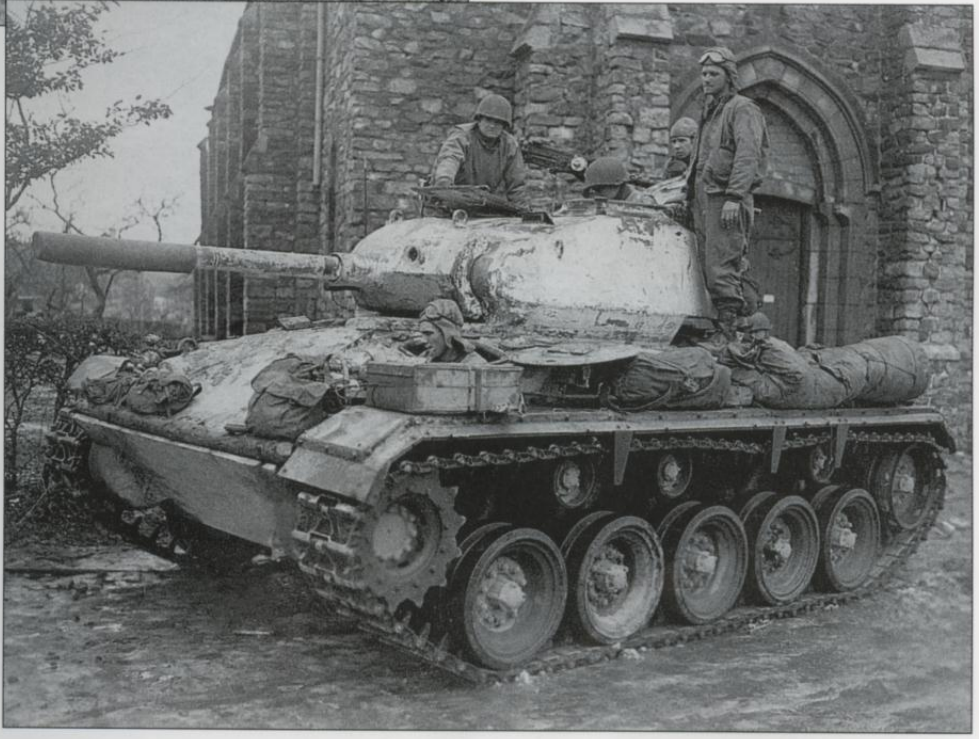


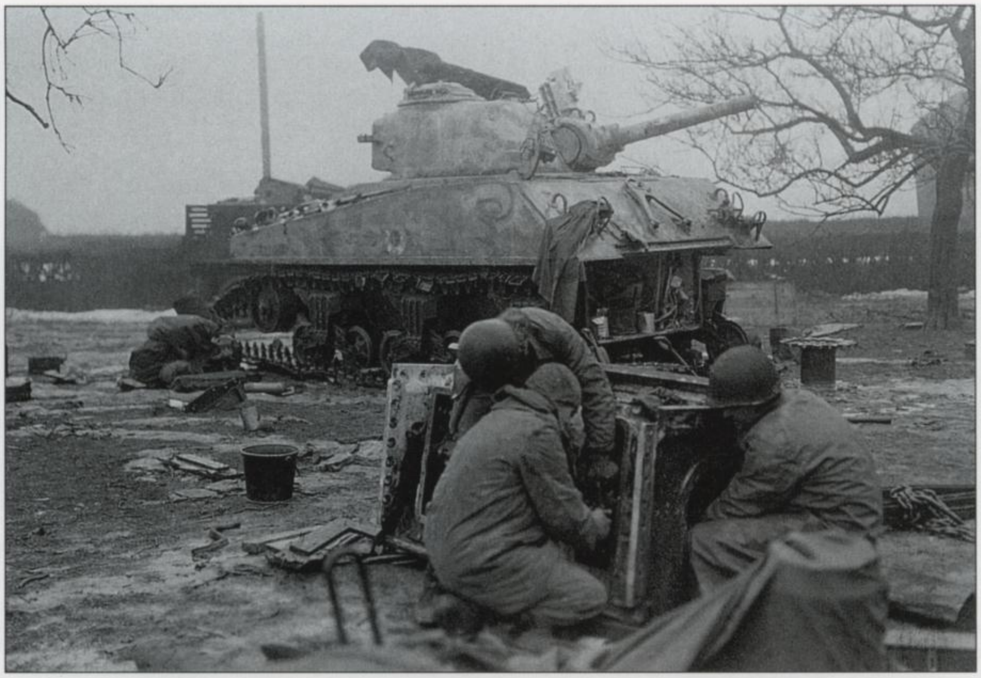
Another M29 utility vehicle being used as an ambulance in support of the 78th Division at the end of January 1945. The M29 was widely used as an ambulance in late January since the normal ambulances, converted Jeeps, could not negotiate the icy, snow-covered roads.


A M29 utility vehicle is being used to evacuate casualties from the 18th Infantry, 1st Division near Herscheid, Belgium on 28 January 1945. As is evident from the markings, these vehicles were often assigned to ordnance units, and then used to form a pool of utility vehicles to serve as ambulances during major engagements. The camouflage is the official pattern for such vehicles.


A M29 utility vehicle is used as an ambulance to move casualties of the 82nd Airborne Division near Herresbach, Belgium on 29 January 1945.

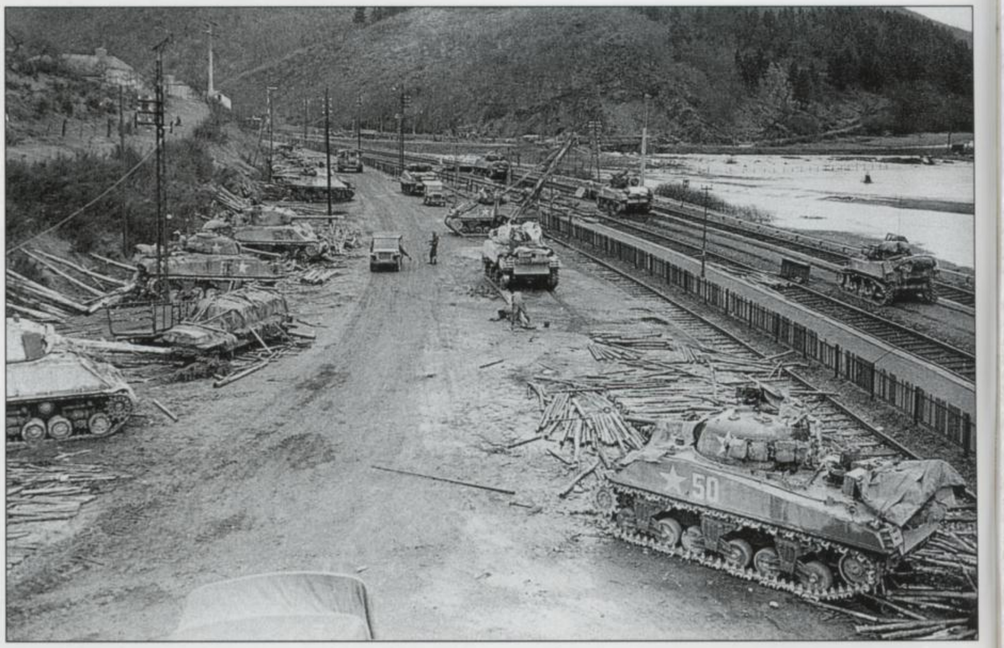

The Luftwaffe was more active over the Bulge than at any previous time in the 1944 campaign in western Europe. But by mid-January, it was crippled by heavy losses especially Operation Bodenplatte, the attack on Allied air bases earlier in the month. So this M16 machine-gun motor carriage of the 457th AAA Battalion has a quiet time overlooking the fields around Canach, Luxembourg at the end of the Ardennes campaign.

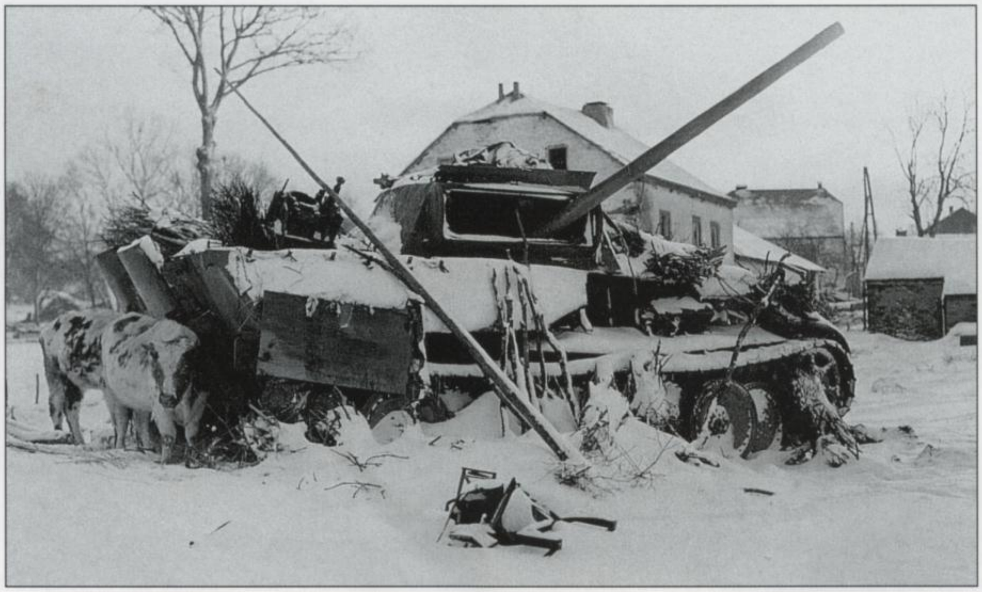

The badly mauled 14th Cavalry Group was rebuilt in Belgium following the Ardennes fighting. Its M5A1 light tanks were replaced with the much improved M24 Chaffee light tank seen here with the 18th Cavalry Squadron at Petit Tier, Belgium on 3 February 1945.



Following the heavy fighting in Belgium, the crew of a M4 (105mm) assault gun of the HQ Company, 69th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division, repair the transmission of their tank, tactical number 58, near Bastogne on 4 February 1945. (Patton Museum)

The tanks of the 69th Tank Battalion remain idle in a rail yard in Drauffet, Luxembourg. Their crews had been pressed into service as infantry in the fighting across the nearby German frontier. The tanks are a typical mixture of types due to the many replacements received during the Ardennes fighting. To the left is a whitewashed M4A3E8 with appliqué turret armor, the newest version of the Sherman to see service in the Ardennes. (Patton Museum)





Destroyed equipment littered the Belgian countryside for years after the fighting. This Panther had been destroyed by an internal ammunition explosion in the village of Rachamps, Belgium and some local cows use it for shelter in March 1945.

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